



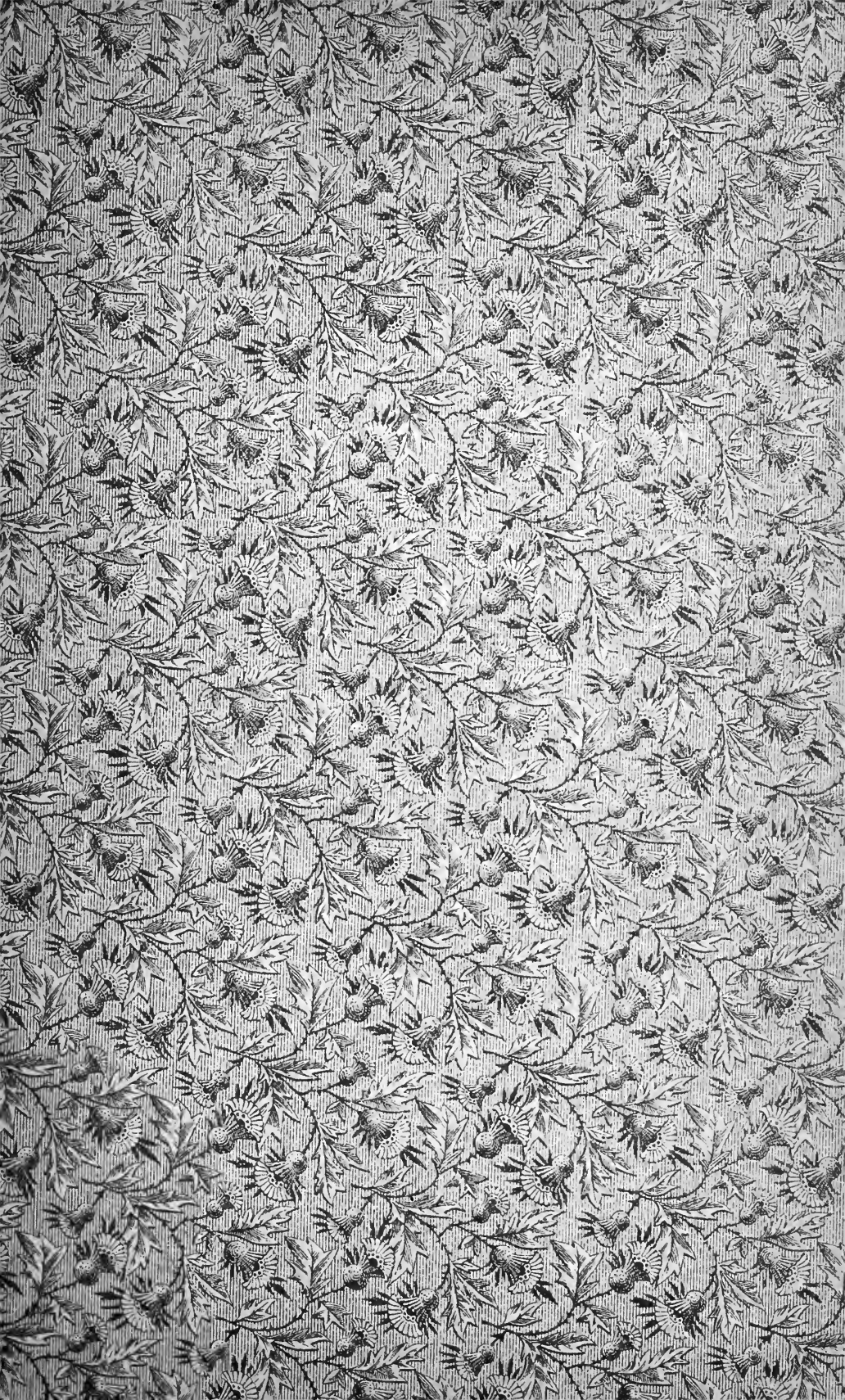
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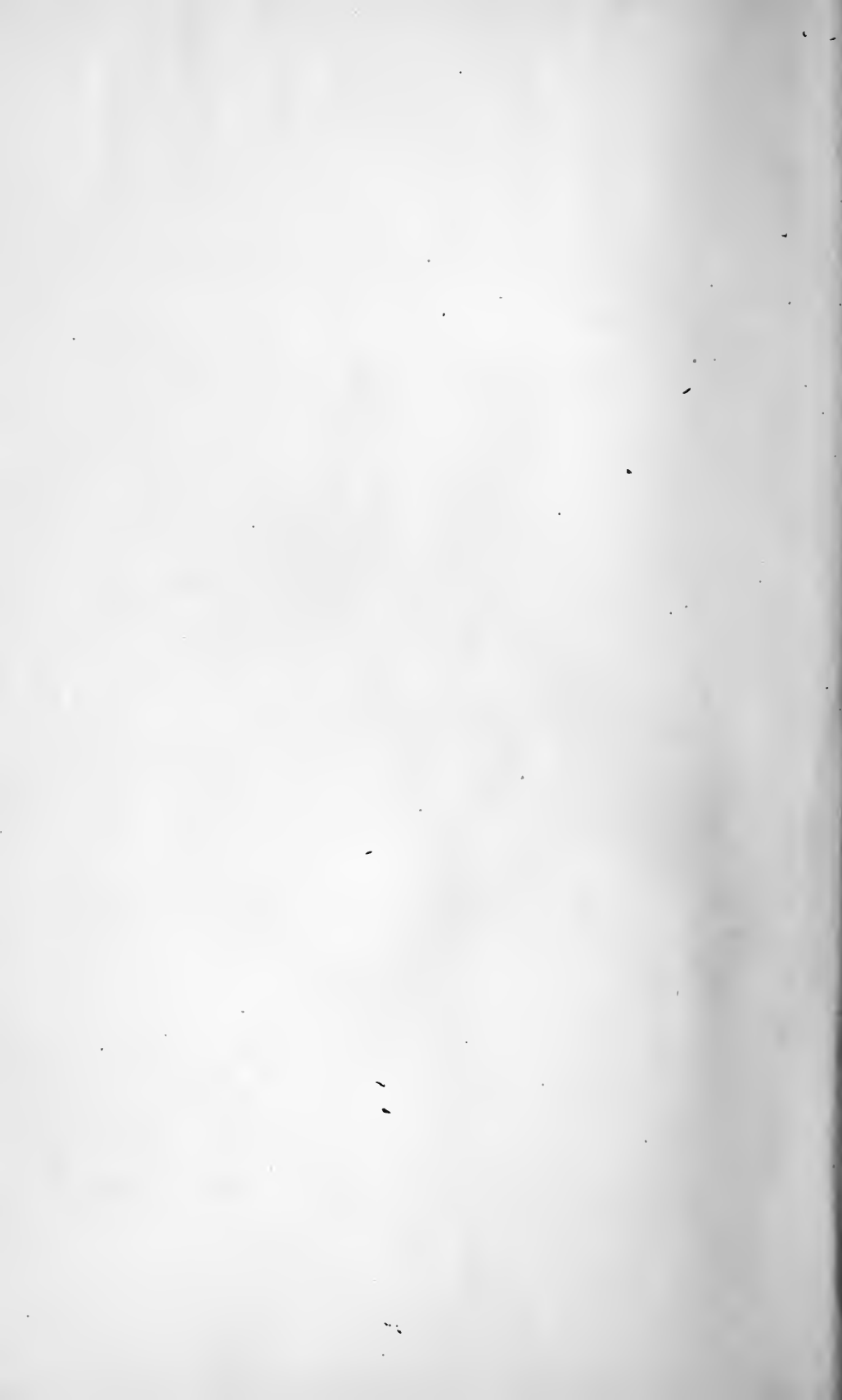
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THE  
OLD THEOLOGY  
RE-STATED

IN SERMONS.

BY  
HENRY H. TUCKER.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—JEREMIAH.

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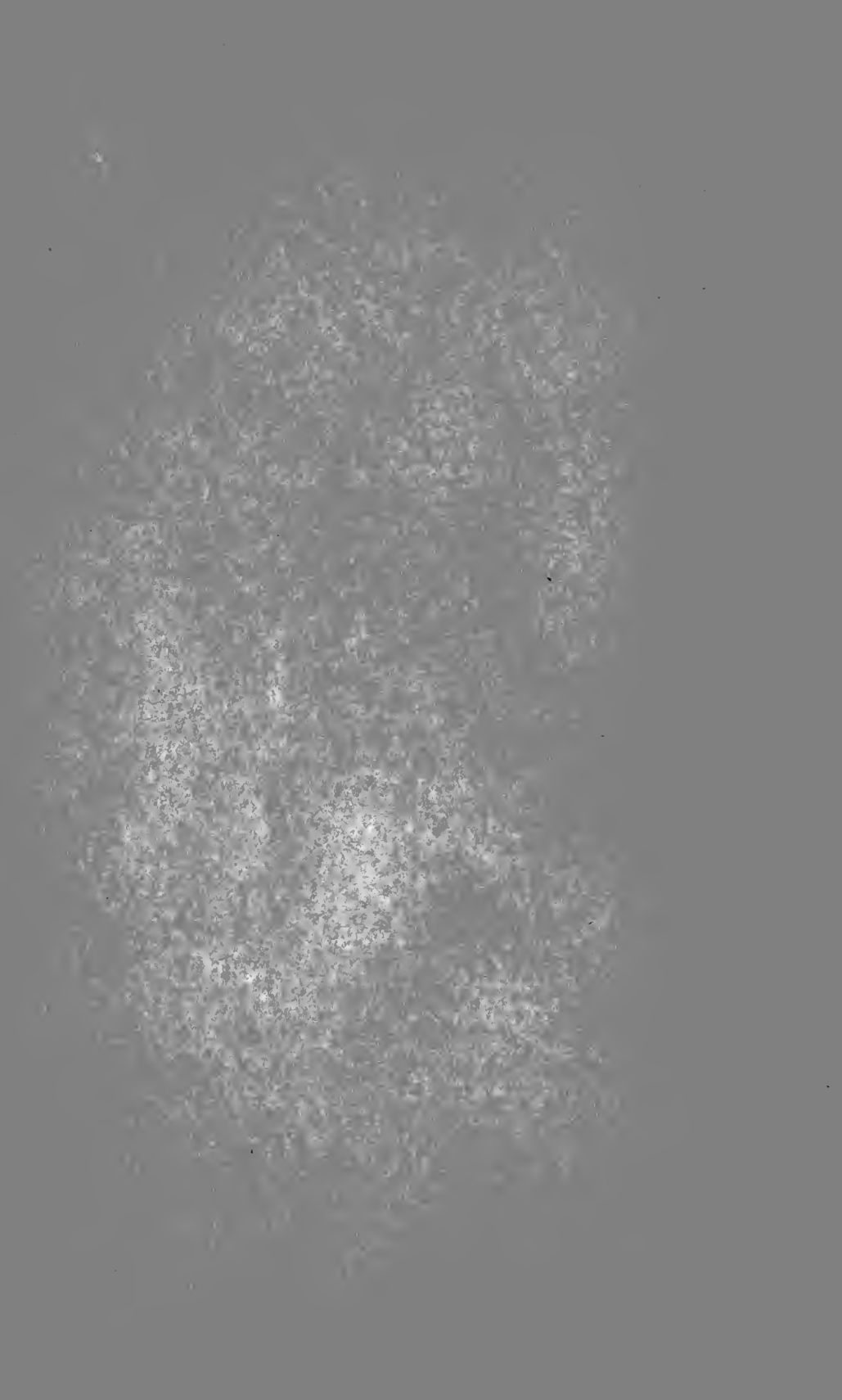
## PREFACE.

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THIS book is not a Body of Divinity, as its title would seem to indicate. It is simply a collection of sermons, all of which, except two or three, were delivered on ordinary occasions, at various intervals, during a ministry of thirty-six years. The author has called it *The Old Theology*, because, while it contains most of his theological views, he trusts that no doctrine will be found on its pages which is not at least eighteen hundred years behind the times. In these latter days many new things in theology have been said, with which the author is not in sympathy, and he has been led to publish these sermons in the hope that some good may be accomplished by a re-statement of the sounder doctrines of centuries ago. The unrest of the age has produced many recent inventions, and these in turn have produced more unrest. In the old paths wherein our fathers walked, and in which Christ and the apostles led the way, we find rest—rest for our souls.

H. H. T.





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# THE OLD THEOLOGY.

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## SERMON I.

### *THE GREAT PARADOX.*

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”  
—PHILIPPIANS ii. 12, 13.

THE text seems to contradict itself. It addresses us as free agents; and yet by assuring us that the first movement of the work enjoined is of God, whose action we cannot control, it seems to teach that we are not free. It brings up at once the apparently irreconcilable doctrines of God’s sovereignty, and man’s free-agency,—the great paradox of the centuries.

Many a sincere lover of souls has been grveled by the scoffer, when this difficulty has been cast in his teeth; many a devout believer has been afraid to face it, lest it might stagger his faith; and many a one weak in the faith, but honest at heart, has had his misgivings lest, after all, the spirit of error, armed with such a stunning argument as this against the consistency of our teachings, should prevail over the Spirit of Christ. They tremble for the ark of God.

Without meaning to underrate the magnitude of the difficulty, it is pleasing to observe that it has scared more people than it has hurt. No man ever yet gave up the religion of Jesus on its account, nor has it ever kept any man from embracing that religion. It is a thing which is

prominent in talk, but which never modifies action. It confronts every man, yet every man walks on, just as if he had not been confronted. It is like a turnstile, which is in everybody's way, and stops nobody. Still, as it is often used as an ostensible excuse for wrong, to which the heart naturally inclines, as it is made to raise a fog, under whose cover evil doers and wrong thinkers make their escape from conviction, it may be well to see if a careful examination of it will not disperse the fog, and lead to the exposure of those who have taken refuge in it, leaving them without even ostensible excuse.

When a troublesome question is to be met, nothing is gained by a tame and feeble statement of it; on the contrary, the boldest policy is the best; and the statement of the question should be made in terms as clear, and as strong, as human language will allow. In order, then, to make a fair and honest issue, let us begin with a definition of terms.

What is meant by the sovereignty of God? It is meant, that God not only reigns, but rules. The universe is his kingdom; eternity is his term of office. The universe meant is the universe of things invisible and intangible, as well as the universe of things visible and tangible; it includes things spiritual, as well as things corporeal; it includes everything conceivable and inconceivable; it includes everything outside of God himself. By his rule is meant, that he controls absolutely all persons and things; all existences, and all modes of existence; all actions, and all modes of action; and as before, the world of thought and feeling is subject to him, exactly as the material world is subject to him; that every atom of matter, and, if the expression be allowed, every atom of not-matter, is under his direction; that he is supreme over the whole, and as supreme over each one of the infinitesimal parts, as he is over all. The Lord is King in any sense, and in every sense, in which absolute,

eternal, and universal supremacy is possible. With these statements, it will not be said, that we have attempted to relieve ourselves from difficulty by an ambiguous or elastic definition, nor by a partial statement, or faint coloring, of the facts.

What is meant by the free agency of man? It is meant that every man can do as he pleases; that he is master—absolute master of his own actions; that as to these, he is to himself what God is to the universe—king. Having said this, we have said enough. But, though it is off the point of free agency, we add that man is morally responsible to God for all his actions, for all his thoughts, for all his desires, for all his feelings of every kind, for all that in his spirit-life he *is*.

Now the question arises, How can a man be a free agent, if God is sovereign in the sense in which his sovereignty has been described?

Relief from the pressure of the paradox thus raised may be found in five ways, and in five only; a sixth has never been suggested, and never will be; either one of the five affords complete logical relief; and one or the other of these every man must accept; it is not matter of choice; one of them *must* be accepted, and in fact every man *does* accept one or the other of them; consciously, or unconsciously.

I. Relief may be found by denying the sovereignty of God. If two doctrines conflict with each other, and one of them be set aside as untrue, there is nothing left for the remaining one to conflict with. But the denial of God's sovereignty involves the necessity of proving that it does not exist. No argument can be found which will make this conclusion certain; and if there were such an argument, the mind shrinks from the conclusion. If we have avoided one difficulty, we have fallen into another. If it can be proved that there is anything which God does not control, the same

argument might prove that there is something else beyond his control, and this argument might be applied in succession to all the parts which compose the whole; and the result is atheism. It is as easy to banish God from all his dominion as from any part of it. Wherever God exists, he exists as supreme. We cannot think of him as destitute of power, or as an inferior power, or as anything else than a controlling power. If there were a spot where God is not, or where he is not supreme, all right-minded beings would shrink away from that spot with horror. If there is a sphere or a spot where God's power is limited, where he could not control if he would, or where he would not if he could, how awful must be its desolation! No, we cannot give up God, nor his sovereignty. From whatever difficulties such sacrifice may relieve us, it involves us in worse—in the worst. At the very thought of such regicide—of such deicide—we stand aghast! It may be said, that the logic of the case does not require such a sacrifice as this; it requires only an abbreviation, or a voluntary suspension of God's power. The soul shudders away with horror unutterable, at the bare suggestion that any of the attributes of the ever-living and all-holy One can fall short of infinite and absolute perfection, or that there can be a point in eternity when he will cease to exercise each and all of them to their full extent. We rejoice that such a thing can be, only as an object of thought; that there is no reality in it, and can be none. We rejoice that the Lord sitteth King, and we trample on a thousand paradoxes to join in the ranks of those who shout: "Alleluiah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

II. There are five modes of relief, and we have rejected one of them. The choice must be between the remaining four. Let us consider, then, the second. Easy escape from the difficulty is found in the denial of free agency; and this for the same reason as in the previous case; when one of two

conflicting doctrines is out of the way, the other has nothing to conflict with. But to deny free agency is to contradict our own consciousness; and where can we go back of that consciousness to find premises on which to frame an argument that will overthrow its deliverances? These deliverances can be neither proved nor disproved. What argument could be made to convince one that he exists, or that he does not exist? We call them the deliverances of consciousness, but are they not rather the deliverances of God, who has so constituted us that we do believe, and cannot but believe them? It may be said that there are cases of mistaken consciousness. Be it so; but such things are always recognized as the result of abnormal conditions. The whole race is not in an abnormal condition; and the race is unanimous in asserting its freedom of action. Not only so; responsibility is connected in our minds with freedom. All men are proud, proud of something that they have done. Most men are ashamed at times, ashamed of something that they have done. Why should this be, if what we call our actions are *not* ours? We hold each other responsible. When others do us a favor, we are grateful; when they do us an injury, we resent it. Why should we be either grateful for favors or indignant at injuries, if the persons who seem to have done these things have really *not* done them? No savage is low enough to regard men as things; and no philosopher has attained to such heights, as to be free from those emotions of pleasure or displeasure which the conduct of others excites. If a man really believed himself to be a mere machine, he would never again congratulate himself on any of his exploits, nor regret any of his misdeeds; nor would he ever experience either anger or approbation at the so-called actions of other machines like himself. Two clods of earth may be thrown in opposite directions, and meet in mid-air, knocking each other to pieces; but neither would attach blame to the other for the



collision. It is impossible to get men to believe that they are like these clods. When they collide, they hold each other responsible; but why should they do so if they are not free agents?

But even if men could be brought to believe that they are nothing but tools in the hands of a superior power, that they are nothing but hammers and axes, the reaching of that conclusion by the race would be the most awful calamity that ever befel it. All sense of responsibility, all moral distinctions, all sense of right and wrong, would be gone; all the moral affections which spring from these would cease to be. Intellect and animal passion might remain as they are; and with this combination, man, brought to the level of beasts, would be the most ferocious of beasts. But why waste words? We do not, and will not, and cannot, deny our freedom of action, and the moral responsibility which it carries with it. Any man who does so is insincere. He would not be willing to see others embrace the doctrine, if he, or his family were in their way, or in their power. At the very moment when the denial is on his lips, let him witness a heroic deed, and he will applaud; or let him witness what is base, and he will denounce.

As to the paradox, there is no doubt that we are logically free from its grasp by denying that men are free agents; but, as in the former case, if we have avoided one trouble, we have fallen into another, and we have made a bad exchange. A thousand times rather let the problem be forever unsolved, than that its solution should come at such expense as this.

III. We set out with five alternatives, and have rejected two of them. Our choice must now be between the remaining three. Our third avenue of escape is in denying *both* the conflicting doctrines. If neither of these is true, there is nothing to be accounted for. Men, in their desperate anxiety to hide from God, may try to persuade themselves that they

know nothing, and that they think nothing, and that no deliverance of consciousness, and no injunction of conscience, and no deduction of reason can be depended on; actually using their reason to prove that they have no reason. But after all their talk, they are more orthodox than they pretend to be. Most of them, at the bottom of their hearts, recognize God, aye, a personal God, and all of them know that they are free agents and responsible. If we cannot deny either of the opposing doctrines, it is needless to say that we cannot deny both. So the third avenue is closed, and we are shut up to choose between the remaining two.

IV. The fourth way to find relief is to show how the conflicting doctrines can be reconciled. This would be grand! This would be glorious! Unfortunately it cannot be done. Perhaps not unfortunately. It may be better as it is; nay, it is surely better. But aside from this, the fact is that the solution of the problem lies beyond the reach of human powers of thought. It is the question of the ages; it has puzzled the world from the beginning. Not only has there been no solution; there has been nothing approximating it. Not only so; no progress has been made in that direction. The world's thought stands exactly where it always stood; it has not advanced a hair's breadth; and at the end of time, it will be found where it was at the beginning. Is it suggested that we do not know what the future may develop? To save words, let this be admitted; but it must also be admitted that, up to the present time, not one ray of light has ever been shed on the subject, and that an infant in the arms knows as much about it as the greatest thinker the world has yet produced. Certainly the aspect of things is, that this is one of the things which the human understanding can never grasp. Hence, whatever may be said about "the developments of the future," all that *we* can do is to acknowledge absolute imbecility. True, there are some who waste their time in trying

to fathom the unfathomable; but life is short, and it is wise to take the facts as we find them. The fact is, that the solution of this problem exceeds our powers; and hence the fourth method of relief is set aside.

V. The fifth one, whatever it may be, is the one which we not only may, but must accept; for we have burned the bridges behind us. As we had only five to begin with, and as four of these have been ruled out by a decision which admits of no reversal, our acceptance of the fifth becomes a necessity. But suppose that the fifth one should not be satisfactory? For logical purposes, it is immaterial whether it be satisfactory or not. It exhausts the possibilities of the case; and hence to refuse to be satisfied is to refuse to be human; and we are not inclined to indulge in so vain a freak. It will be shown presently, however, that it is satisfactory to the whole human race in matters of practice, though, indeed, it may be an annoyance to those who vex themselves with the vanities of speculative inquiry.

Here, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter: We must accept each of these doctrines as true, and if true, then reconcilable, for all truth must be harmonious with itself; but we must admit that the agreement of the two is not within the limits of human thought. Why should not this conclusion be satisfactory? Is it at all surprising that there should be some things objectively in concord, which are not subjectively so? Is it claimed for the human mind that it can solve *all* problems? If there be any out of reach, why should not this be one of them? Whatever questions may be asked, we are confronted with the fact (and facts are very stubborn) that each of the doctrines is substantiated, and with the fact that we cannot reconcile them.

Anterior to the time of Lord Bacon, it was common to form theories first, and afterwards to shape the facts to fit the theories. It took the world six thousand years to produce a

philosopher who perceived that this was preposterous, and that to begin at the right end, is to accept the facts, and shape the theory to fit the facts. In the present case, we have not troubled ourselves to form a theory, but have simply accepted the facts; and there we rest. Each of the known facts is valuable. It is good to know that God is supreme, that we may render him that homage which is justly due to his Infinite Majesty; it is good to know that we are free agents, and responsible, and responsible to *him*, that we may make his law the rule of our lives. God allows us to know as much as is of value to us, and nothing more.

The solution of the paradox would do us no good; and this appears from a fact which we may regard with great complacency. The fact is this: That our inability to solve the paradox has never had any practical effect on the ordinary conduct of mankind. The puzzle is one which men talk about, but which never interferes either with religious duty, or with secular business. Those who desire to serve God will do so, without stopping to settle questions like this; while those who are averse to his service would find some other excuse, if this were out of the way. So, too, in worldly affairs. It is admitted that God only can give the increase of the grain, but we never hear of an agriculturist who neglects to till the ground on this account. It is admitted that our lives are in the hands of God; but we never hear of one falling into deep water who fails, on this account, to swim out, if he can. The metaphysician himself, who spends his time on knotty points, would forget his philosophy if he should happen to tread on a rattlesnake, and would leap aside as nimbly as the swain who never heard of philosophy. The truth is that this is one instance in which the race, taken as a whole, is wiser than its philosophers. The common sense of mankind has settled this question long ago. It has decided to accept the facts, and leave the harmonies uninvestigated.

The question is an open one with those only who love to perplex themselves with endeavors to discover the undiscoverable.

There are those who try to make themselves believe that the problem under consideration is found only in the sphere of morals. It has already been intimated that this is not so, but it may be well to say more distinctly, that the same problem is found in every department of thought, and is involved in every action of every day life. A striking instance of this is found in social statistics. A certain proportion of every large population commit suicide. This proportion is a fixed quantity, and is known. Not only so: a certain number of the self-murderers will select poison as the means of destruction, a certain other number will use firearms, a certain other number will resort to drowning, and a certain other number will throw themselves from precipices or lofty buildings, not to mention various other methods of committing this unhappy deed. Now, confining our notice to the modes, the selection of the instrument of death is an act of human volition; and in this case there is less influence from disturbing causes than in any other; for suicides never advise about their plans; they keep their own counsels, and in their choice of modes are perfectly free to do as they please. Their own will is supreme in the premises. Yet the proportion of those who will resort to any one of these methods can be foretold with almost mathematical certainty. Year after year, the proportions remain almost exactly the same; and if the induction should include many millions of instances, instead of only a few hundreds or thousands, the proportion would doubtless prove to be *precisely* the same. Such regularity dispels the idea of accident. Regularity proves law, and law implies a lawgiver. We see, then, that there is a law, a higher law, a law of which we know nothing, controlling human actions, while yet those actions are purely



voluntary. How can this be? We do not know. But the facts are before us. Nor is there any question of morals involved in them; in the act of suicide the element of morals does indeed enter, but there is no moral element in the choice of modes; and as regards both the act and the modes of the act, we perceive that the proportions are uniform. Innumerable other facts of the same character might be added.<sup>1</sup> In all these it may be asked, "How is it that in things which are left to individual choice there is an outside power, unseen and superior, which lays down the rule by which these things take place"? And the question must remain forever unanswered. Yet we have no dispute on this question; no bewildering cloud of dust is raised; and nobody tries to get rid of the difficulty by denying the facts, nor in any other way. The facts are simply accepted, and the great paradox, though not understood, is quietly acquiesced in, and everybody is satisfied. Yet let the same question arise in any religious connection, and there are those who raise a pother, and, thickening the air with words, demand an explanation, promising to become disciples when the explanation is given—a safe promise truly.

Again, there are some who raise no discussions, and say nothing on the subject, keeping their thoughts and their spirit-life to themselves, who nevertheless are secretly per-

<sup>1</sup> Among the millions of letters dropped in the Post Offices of the United States, there are always some with no superscription on the back, and these frequently contain money, and sometimes, large sums of money. The proportion of these to letters properly directed is always the same. A certain other number of letters frequently containing money, are addressed to the person, without naming the city, county, town, or state. The proportion of these also is a fixed quantity, and never varies! The absent-minded ones are obeying, all unwittingly, a great *law*; a law that rules over all. Even so insignificant a thing as failure to give proper direction to a letter, most generally a letter of no value, cannot escape the all-embracing, all-pervading *law*; yet freedom of action is not interfered with!

plexed because they cannot understand mysteries. The same common sense which controls them in other matters should control them here. The mysteries of nature are quite as profound as the mysteries of grace. Yet the persons referred to never allow the great paradox, nor any other paradox, to interfere with their worldly business; indeed, all such things are unnoticed, and people need to be reminded of them to be conscious that they exist. But the moment that Christian duty is mentioned or thought of, mountains are in the way. The real mountain is not in the paradox, but in their reluctance to submit to the law of God, to the gospel of Christ. They imagine that their dispositions are all right, and that what intervenes between them and Christ is an intellectual difficulty. Not so; the trouble is not in the head, it is in the heart.

It is a very common thing for facts to appear to be inconsistent with each other, when we know that they are not so. Why should not the same be true of principles? Let us select one illustration from many. Suppose a man to stand midway between the bars of a railroad, which for a long distance is without curves. He will observe that a certain distance before him, let us call it a thousand yards, the two lines of rail come to a point. There can be no doubt of the fact, because he *sees* it. Let him advance a thousand yards, and he will find that he was mistaken, not as to the fact of junction, but as to the point where it takes place; this point is ascertained to be *two* thousand yards from where he first stood. On advancing a thousand yards for the second time, he finds that he is again mistaken, just as before, not as to the essential fact, but as to its locality; and thus he may repeat the experiment indefinitely, and the result will always be the same. Now let him go back to the starting point, and by the use of an opera-glass, he will discover that his eye had deceived him as to the distance, but not as to the fact of

junction. With a ship-master's spy-glass he will find that the opera-glass deceived him, just as his eye had done. Then let him procure a glass of sufficient power to bring the end of the road optically close to him, and he will discover that his eye and all previous glasses have deceived him, not as to locality, but as to the essential fact, and that the rails do not come together at all! Subjectively, the lines are at an angle with each other; objectively, they are parallel.

If in this material world things may seem to us to be what we know they are not, why may not the same phenomenon exist in the world of thought? Is it an unthinkable thing, or an unreasonable thing, or even a surprising thing, that doctrines may appear to us to impinge on each other, when they do not so impinge? Indeed, it would be much more surprising if there were no such apparent, but unreal contradictions. Limited as our powers are, not one of us being able to tell why a grain of corn should grow when planted in the ground, it is inconceivable that it should be otherwise than that many things should appear to us to be out of order, when they are in order. The trouble with the observer on the railroad was in his own eye, not in the outward facts. So in other things. We are very short-sighted. Things that extend beyond our range of vision seem to be at angles when they are parallel.<sup>1</sup> When things which begin on earth are protracted into eternity, or whenever in any way, we deal with the infinite, it is to be expected that our weak vision will deceive us; we know that it *will* deceive us; we do not trust to it; and we, in our duty to God, as all other men in practical business, walk by faith, and not by sight. These doctrines appear to us to impinge on each other; but we know that they are both true, and hence, we know that they

<sup>1</sup>Sometimes the reverse is the case; that is, lines seem to be parallel when we know that they are at angles; e. g., the parallax of a fixed star even with the diameter of the earth's orbit for a base.

do not so impinge, and that the contradictory appearance is only an optical illusion of the mind. With stronger vision we might see that there is no conflict, where now conflict seems to be palpable; and certainly with God, who sees the end from the beginning, to whom the infinite future is as the present, truths which seem to us to run counter, just above our heads, rise up in sublime parallelism, towering into eternity, and each forever immutable. God is King, and we are his responsible subjects. With these facts let us be satisfied, and leave it to him, who alone is capable of it, to perceive the harmonies of eternal truth. To our eyes, God often seems to be at cross purposes with himself; but we may be sure that the All-wise and Almighty Lawgiver of the universe has no purposes but those of infinite excellence, and that he knows how to carry them out. Many of the dealings of providence are inscrutable, and some of them are just the reverse of what appears to us to be expedient, wise, or right; but if we murmur, we are rebuked by the sweet song of Zion:

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.

In all the storm of the most tempestuous life, we rejoice that the Lord reigneth. Oh, glorious faith! Oh, the bliss of believing in God! Clouds and darkness may be round about him, but nothing shakes our confidence, for we know that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. It may be that in a better world he will reveal to us what he now keeps secret. It may be that we shall look back with spiritual eyes on this world, with the light of eternity

shining upon it, and see that what now appears to be confusion and conflict and chaos was but the harmonious working together of all things for good, to them that love God; and it may be that our spiritual vision will be so extended that the great paradox will resolve itself before our eyes into simplicity and beauty! But should this be denied to us, we shall still be happy, as we are now, in the God of our salvation, and will forever speak with joyous exultation of the glorious honor of his majesty, and of his wondrous works.

It is painful to leave the heavenly atmosphere, and come down to a lower plane. There are men, already spoken of, who raise the point of difficulty treated of in this discourse, and demand its elucidation. Hypocrisy is at the bottom of all that they say. They pretend that they expect explanation, when they know that explanation is impossible. They pretend to believe that this difficulty inheres in Christianity alone, and that its ministers are under special obligations to make it clear, when they know that it inheres in all human affairs as well, and that it imposes special obligations on none. They pretend that this is the obstacle between them and the religion of Jesus, when they know that their motive in making the point is to raise a little wordy war, in the smoke of which they can make their escape. Or they may pretend that they are earnestly seeking the truth, when their real object is to annoy the preacher; and they smile at his discomfiture, if he should be so unwary as to allow himself to be the victim of their scheme. There is unmanliness in this tissue of pretences. Why do they not come out squarely, like men, and say that they will not accept the gospel, because they are unwilling to yield to its righteous demands? What shall be done with these triflers? Their trick is an old one, and it requires grace to be forbearing; but the injunctions of the apostle come well to the point: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all

men; apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 24-26.

There are those who seem to imagine that they alone have discovered this apparent conflict of truths, and who parade their discovery, on frequent occasions, as an evidence of their superior intellectual acumen. So might a chattering idiot point everybody to a tree, saying, tree! tree! in order to exhibit his attainments in knowledge. Some pride themselves on being able to ask questions which even a preacher cannot answer; but this is a gift which they enjoy in common with all little children who are old enough to talk. Of course, none but the shallower sort are so foolish as this; but even these weaklings must be tenderly dealt with, and it may be that, in time, the manly humility of the gospel will displace their childish vanity.

To-day's text is addressed to the "beloved," to "the saints in Christ Jesus, who were at Philippi." These were already saved, and the apostle knew it; yet he tells them to "work out their own salvation." What did he mean by this? That he did *not* mean that their good works were to be the ground of their salvation is manifest; for, first, as just now stated, he knew that they were saved already; second, because he says, in the very same breath, that the *will*, which lies at the bottom of character and action, had been set right by the power of God; and third, from the general tenor of the apostle's teachings. He surely did not mean to contradict, in these two lines, the doctrine to which he seems chiefly to have devoted his life. So whatever may be the right interpretation, we may be sure as to what is a wrong one. Possibly the words "fear and trembling" may help us to see what is meant. Why should they fear? and why should they tremble? Is

it because God's promises are unsure? or because the atonement might fail of effect? Surely Paul meant no such thing. The only ground of fear is that they might come short of doing the full measure of their duty; there is no occasion to tremble, except in view of their responsibilities to God, whose grace had saved them. The exhortation then seems to mean only that, with a becoming distrust of their own strength, they should strive to do those things which are the outworkings of salvation already inwrought. Elsewhere, the same apostle says: "Not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. ii. 10. The way of putting the truth is very different in these two passages; but if the language could be entirely dispensed with, and if the thought, in each case, could be presented to us as a picture, would we not regard the two as pictures of the same thing? Language is, at best, but an imperfect medium of thought. If such a thing as spiritual object-teaching were possible, we should both apprehend and comprehend many things of which we have now but poor conceptions. Suppose that there were a window in the apostle's breast, through which we could look, and see his thoughts. Looking through the window into the apostle's soul, when he penned the text just quoted from his Epistle to the Ephesians, then looking when he penned this morning's text, would not the very same spectacle be presented to the eye? In each case, we should see that salvation is of grace; in each case, we should see that it is our duty to work; in each case, we should see that the work is the outcome of the grace implanted; in neither case should we see anything else. Thus are the glories of the gospel brought into a glowing focus, whose white light flings splendor all around, yet does not dazzle. Salvation of grace! Glorious hope! We stand on an eternal rock. Any other salvation would be an unfixed,

an uncertain quantity, a shifting sand! Duties assigned us! Work to do! Precious privilege! Would we have it otherwise? Half the joy of salvation would be gone! *Could* it be otherwise? Are those for whom Christ died to be the only idlers and drones in the universe? Are they to be a gazing-stock, presenting the pitiable spectacle of intelligent creatures formed for infinite activities, yet doomed to the penalty of perpetual inertia? No! Works innumerable, works immense! and with them, commensurate joys and glories! The works being the outcome of the grace, are acceptable; the imprimatur of grace upon them *makes* them acceptable. No other works could be acceptable; for even the *ploughing* of the wicked is sin. "Work out your own salvation." The precept is for our obedience. "For it is God that worketh in you." The declaration is for our faith. Obedience and faith! The two grand pillars of the whole Christian system! Both reaching from earth to heaven, and therefore parallel; yet, as to us, whose sight falls short far this side the infinite, the space between them diminishes to nothingness, and they seem to incline to oneness. In spirit, they do thus incline; for faith leads to obedience, and obedience strengthens faith.

Work is duty; and the more of it one does, while yet not trusting to its merit, and prompted to it by love, the more evidence he will have that he is the possessor of that grace from which alone such work can proceed. He may fear and tremble to the last; for the more progress he makes in the divine life, the more exalted will be his view of the law's demands, and the more impressed he will be with a sense of his obligation to the Lord who saved him, and with a sense of his own insufficiency. But as his faith in himself grows weaker, his faith in Christ grows stronger; and thus he develops the grace that is given him, and is partaking more and more largely every day of the salvation already begun,



and which will be completed in eternity. This is what is meant by working out salvation.

The apostle gives a grand reason why the saints,—the saved,—should work. In this, they are carrying out the purposes of God, and thus become workers together with him; in this, they are preparing themselves for an entrance into the kingdom; in this, they enjoy a foretaste of the joys to come; for the doing of his will is a part of that which makes heaven what it is; and in doing it now, there is heaven begun. We can imagine ourselves to be again looking into the apostle's breast, and there we see, in their beauty and in their excellence, visible sentiments, which we try to describe in words: "How has it come to pass that I have led this life of consecration? It is not of myself; God has wrought it in me; and I am confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. i. 6.) To God be the glory, and let his service be my chief joy."

Grace is a tree of the Lord's planting. Isa. lxi. 3. The trees of the Lord are full of sap (Ps. civ. 16), and hence they never die; but if we would hasten the bearing, and increase the yield, and infuse richness and aroma into the fruit, we must cultivate, and water, and cherish. If the planting of the tree is the Lord's work, it is ours to dress it, and to till it, that it may be "fat and flourishing."

It is only speculative inquiry that troubles itself with the great paradox suggested by this morning's text, suggested indeed to us, but probably not thought of by the apostle when he wrote it; he doubtless saw nothing but the beauty and glory of truth, and was not thinking of paradoxes, nor of profane and vain babblings, nor of oppositions of science, falsely so-called. Spiritual discernment sees nothing but what the writer intended—warm exhortation to duty, based on an eternal foundation. The gracious heart, profiting by

the words, distrusts itself, with fear and trembling, more than ever; trusts in Him who gives eternal life, with confidence more than ever; and sets out afresh, in a life of work and worship, with increased and increasing zeal.

## SERMON II.

### *THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.*

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”—MATTHEW xviii. 1-6.

#### PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

WE learn from the parallel passage in Mark that there had been a dispute among the disciples as to who should be greatest; not greatest in the kingdom of heaven, as their question as reported by Matthew seems to indicate, but greatest among themselves; and the distinction coveted seems not to have been of heaven, but of earth. Our Lord did not answer their question, but proceeded at once to instruct them in the first principles of his religion; and this was done in generic terms, such as would apply to the case in hand, it is true, but not more to that than to innumerable cases that might arise. He said nothing about rebuke, though they deserved rebuke; he spared their feelings; though in what he said there *was* rebuke, wonderful for its gentleness, wonderful for its power.

The child spoken of was a little child, small enough, as we learn from Mark, to be taken in the arms. A larger child might not have been innocent enough to answer our

Saviour's purpose of illustration. Still, the child was not a mere infant, but was old enough to walk; for it came when "called." Jesus did not say that the child was humble, but he did use the words, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child." There is no humility in a child's *being* a child, but there is humility when a man is willing to be *like* a child. That our Lord was speaking of mature persons, having some of the marks of little children, appears from the fact that he describes those "who believe in him" as "little ones"; and he uses this expression three times in this very chapter. In Mark x. 15, he says: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"; nearly the same words may be found in Luke xviii. 17; and this shows his meaning to be that the reception of the gospel must be in the *spirit* of a little child. In John xiii. 33, he says: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." This was just after the Supper, when none were present but grown men—the apostles. From all these passages we learn that when, on another occasion, he said: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," he refers not to actual infants, but to those "little ones," as they are called by a figure, who have "*become* as little children" (verse 3). It is common to quote the words, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," as applied to infants. But this is misrepresenting our Lord, for he did not use the words in this way. He was describing not our little ones, but *his* little ones; and the word *such* refers to characters, not to persons. That he does not refer to actual children, appears, not only from the context, but also for the reason that this interpretation of his words would seem to imply that the kingdom of heaven is composed wholly of children, to the exclusion of all others. It is a much more happy belief that little children, and those who are like them, are the inheritors of the kingdom. Doubtless, little children will be received into the kingdom,

but this text does not prove it. The truth is, that no text proves it. The gospel is not addressed to those who are wholly incapable of understanding either it or anything else; and consequently nothing is said in the New Testament about the spiritual condition of such persons, nor of their future. It is only on general principles, not on particular texts, that our belief in infant salvation is based; but those principles are broad enough to include all irresponsible persons, whether the congenitally insane, or idiots, or the infant children, either of Christian parents, or of those who have heard of Christ and wickedly rejected him, or of heathen who never heard of Christ.

The figure by which our Saviour speaks of believers as little children is a common one in the New Testament. It is a favorite figure with the Apostle John, who uses it frequently. "My little children," says he, "I write unto you"; "Little children, it is the last time"; "Now, little children, abide in him"; "Little children, let no man deceive you"; "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them" (the world). How manifest it is, that he refers to the spirit of little children in mature people, and not to actual children! So likewise Paul, in Gal. iv. 19, says: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, . . . I desire to be present with you"; and using the same figure, he says in 1 Cor. xiv. 20: "In malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men." The Apostle Peter makes a similar application of the figure when he says: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Peter ii. 2. All these passages together have suggested the analogies which constitute the body of the following sermon.

As the word *converted* is used in the text about to be selected, it may be well to explain its meaning. Much confusion of thought has arisen from the interchangeable use of the words *conversion* and *regeneration*. Regeneration

is a change wrought in our moral nature by the Holy Spirit; a change so radical and total, that he who experiences it is truly said to be "born again," and is actually and literally a new creature. From the very nature of this change, it must be exclusively the act of the Almighty; for none but he who creates can *re-create*. From its very nature, also, it can occur but once. When a man is once born of the Spirit he cannot afterwards be again born of the Spirit. One birth is all that is either necessary or possible. There may be one birth of one kind, and another birth of another kind; but that there should be two births of the *same* kind is as inconceivable to all men as it was to Nicodemus. He who is "begotten of God" (1 John v. 18) and is "born of the Spirit" will forever remain begotten and born; nothing more will be needed to fix his state, and nothing can alter it. As with physical birth, when it has once become a fact, nothing can make it cease to be a fact, and nothing afterwards can make it more or less a matter of fact than it was at first.

The word *conversion*, in its etymological sense (and it is used in this sense in the text), denotes a mere change of conduct. In this sense, conversion may occur any number of times. Conversion is the result of regeneration. It is the act of the creature as exclusively as any act can be. Regeneration is a change of nature; conversion is a change of conduct, which is the carrying out of that nature. The two things being so nearly allied in point of fact, and so nearly related in point of time, and so intimately associated in our minds, it is easy to see how the words which designate them have come to be used convertibly. To this careless usage, or perhaps figurative usage, which puts effect for cause, some serious difficulties owe their origin, and to this too, perhaps, some grave theological errors may be traced.

The words, "kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of God," have various meanings in the New Testament, and must be

understood according to the context. In the text now selected it means the kingdom of grace in this world, and by implication carries with it salvation in the world to come.

## TEXT.

“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—MATTHEW xviii. 3.

To many minds, this morning's text presents a difficulty. Our Saviour says: “Except ye be converted,” to his disciples, who were regenerate. Our preliminary remarks have explained that while there can be but one regeneration, there may be many conversions. The disciples, though regenerate, had fallen into an evil way, and it was needful that they should be converted from it, that is, turned away from it. It is proper to observe, however, that while the words of our Lord were addressed to the disciples in *form*, they were intended for all mankind in *fact*. Jesus did not say which of them should be greatest, nor whether any of them should be such; but he laid down the broad principle on which his kingdom is founded. When he says: “Except ye be converted,” what he means is, except any man be converted; or as the whole verse may be paraphrased: No man can enter into the kingdom of heaven unless he turns away from evil, and becomes like a little child. That his instructions were of a general nature, and not intended for particular application to that occasion only, appears from the context. When he said: “Whosoever shall humble himself,” he did not mean to say, Whosoever of *you*; he meant to use the word *whosoever* in its broadest sense; that is, *any* man who will humble himself. When he said: “The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,” he did not mean that any one of *them* would surely be greatest; he meant that any man, whoever he might be, who would exhibit the character which he meant by the symbol of a little child to describe, would be greatest.

The general nature, rather than the particular application of his discourse, is still more manifest from the sixth verse, where he says: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me," evidently including all believers, and most certainly not confining the thought to those who stood before him, though they too were "little ones," in the sense in which that expression is used.

Our Saviour frequently describes things that are, or that ought to be, by telling us what they are *like*. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, or like leaven, or like the ten virgins, or like a certain king, like to a treasure, like to a merchant, like to a net, like to a householder. In the text before us, we are taught that the spirit and character of the subjects of Christ's kingdom are like a little child's. Our Lord, not satisfied with mere verbal statement, resorted to his habit of object-teaching; and to make the lesson so impressive that they could never forget it, he called a little child and set him in the midst; and directing all eyes to the little one who was thus the central figure, with a band of apostles and the Saviour of the world standing around, he said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." One of the evangelists says that Jesus took the child in his arms. Perhaps it was at this moment that, clasping the little one to his bosom, he said: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." How great is the mystery of godliness! A little child is held up before the whole world, in the arms of the Son of God, as a model of greatness! We should have selected a little child as an emblem of weakness. How different the religion of Jesus from all teachings of human philosophy! If asked, Who are the great? we should point to those whose names stand out grandly in history. Jesus Christ in answer to that question, holds up a little child!



An illustration unearthlike! The imprimatur of heaven is upon it!

There was nothing peculiar in the child which our Saviour held in his arms that made him, above other children, a pattern for our imitation. He served the purpose only in so far as he possessed qualities in common with all children. Neither was there anything peculiar in that band of disciples which made the lesson especially appropriate to them. The occasion indeed made the lesson appropriate, yet these were but specimen men, as that was a specimen child. All men need the same lesson, and all children embody that lesson in themselves. Whenever, O disciple! you see a little child, let it remind you of your Saviour, and of that impressive moment when he chose the weak things of this world to instruct, as well as to confound, the mighty. In every child you see a little evangelist, an unconscious little preacher, who brings you a message from Jesus, and repeats his sermon to his disciples. Wherever the patter of little feet, or the voice of childhood is heard, there to the end of time are re-echoed the teachings of the Saviour of mankind. It is wonderful indeed, and it is touching to think that God has chosen, not the noble and the great, nor heroes, nor statesmen, nor philosophers, whose example most people *could* not copy, but that he has commissioned a great army of little children, as the models for those who are to bear his banner, conquering through the world. When the evil passions that infest the world, as ferocious beasts the forest, shall disappear, and when is established the reign of the Prince of Peace, it will not be before brute force, nor yet by overwhelming argument, but under the subduing influence of those child-like traits which the gospel of Christ infuses into its disciples.

Hear, then, all ye people! Be still, and listen when Jesus speaks. "Except ye be converted, and become as

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Proud, high-minded, haughty, exalted as you may be, you must let yourself down; manly and dignified as you may consider yourself, you must be like a little child, or you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven—and, alas! for those who are shut out of it! Here is the inexorable alternative, and you must choose between its two conditions: Take the little child for your model, or fail of heaven.

It becomes now a natural inquiry, In what respects does the child-like character of the Christian consist? The answer to this question will constitute the body of this discourse.

To guard against error, it is proper to say in advance that children are as really depraved as mature men. Human nature is corrupt from the beginning. Too often even in earliest years we see symptoms of that evil spirit that infests the whole race. Still, the characteristic marks of childhood, the traits by which we describe it, are gentle and amiable. It is the period of comparative innocency and purity. It is the ideal childhood, childhood bereft of its imperfections, that is held up for our imitation.

But to the particulars. The trait of childhood to which our Saviour seems most especially to refer in the text before us is what we call its humility; humility not as opposed to pride, but as opposed to ambition. The disciples had been striving among themselves as to who should be greatest. Children, that is, very young children, never do this. They do not know that there is any such thing as greatness. They have no desire for distinction, nor are they capable of entertaining such a thought. A man who is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Jesus is just as incapable of the desire. It is the very opposite, the very antagonism, of all that Jesus taught. The men among us who covet the high places, and who plume themselves on their attainment to them, would do well to imagine them-

selves in the circle that stood around the little child, whom Jesus then took in his arms, when, with amazing tenderness and marvelous beauty, and yet with the stern emphasis of heaven, the hateful spirit of ambition was rebuked. There is no virtue in the child's lowliness; but when a man is so lowly, it is an ornament of grace about his neck. Ambition, such as led to strife among the twelve, especially when it is manifested, when it is worn on the neck, is the collar of a bad master. Tear it away! Dash it down, O disciple, and instead of desiring to be greatest, make yourself less than the least. Do this, and whatever you may be on earth, you will surely be great in the kingdom of heaven.

Humility, as opposed to pride, or what passes for it, is also a trait of children. The germ of the evil is within them, but it is not developed until they make some little advance in years. They regard not the difference between the high and the humble, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free. They love those who sympathize with them, whatever their condition. The little prince, if allowed to do so, would find a boon companion in the little beggar, priding himself on no vain distinction. In this respect the Christian should be like a little child. That which exists in the child from ignorance, must exist in the man from principle. The negative virtue of the child, which exists, because, as we say, he knows no better, should be the positive virtue of the man, and be practiced by him because he knows it is right. The Christian is not required to spend all his time in company with those whose inferior gifts have disqualified them for his companionship, or who for any reason are disagreeable to him. It is only a *visit*, and not permanent abode, which is the subject of eulogy at the last day; and our Lord himself had his favorites. Out of all his disciples he chose twelve; out of the twelve he chose three; out of the three he chose one, the only one of whom it is said that Jesus loved him.

We are allowed to indulge our feelings by seeking the society of those whose tastes and pursuits are congenial with our own; individual preference is no more bound in this regard than in any other; yet the teaching of the gospel is that we must mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. The very mention of condescension and of low estate is acknowledgment of difference in rank; and condescension is the very duty that is enjoined. The man of God obeys his impulses at the same time that he obeys the injunction; he makes no distinction among the people of God, but in that capacity loves them all alike, except that he loves more those who have more grace. He has the same fraternal feeling for the servant that waits upon his table that he has for his most cherished and most distinguished guest. Even the low born and the low bred and the vile, the outcasts, he recognizes as the children of a common Father with himself, and will take delight in condescending to do them service. Whatever distinctions we may enjoy that elevate us among men, we should not pride ourselves on them, but enjoy them with grateful hearts, in all humility and lowliness of mind, remembering that it is not of our merit, but of God's goodness to us, that we are made to differ. The child is too ignorant to be proud, and therefore *seems* to be humble. The Christian should be too sensible of his own unworthiness to be proud, and should therefore possess the reality, of which the child bears the semblance.

But there is another way in which children exhibit the same quality and teach the same lesson. They are not too proud to indulge in their amusements before anybody, or under any circumstances, and will gambol on the floor or on the lawn, before princes or peasants alike, or all the world, unconscious of self, and careless of criticism. He who would come up to the model must bear testimony for Jesus, with the same forgetfulness of self and of the world.

It would be hard for some of you to comply with the requisitions of the gospel before the gainsayers and the scoffers. But you must learn to care as little for the world in doing your duty, as a child does in seeking its pleasure. It goes hard with stern and strong manhood to humble one's self before the world, as the disciple must do when he puts on Christ. It is hard for sober middle age to confess its weakness; harder still perhaps, for scanty manhood, having nothing to spare, to acknowledge its insufficiency; but the alternative is distinctly put by Jesus Christ: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." You must come to it at last. The only question, if you are ever saved, is whether you will do it now because it is right, or wait until the eleventh hour and do it from a less noble motive. The true manhood is in doing it now. When you are weak, then are you strong. It is the splendid paradox of the gospel; splendid because so striking, and yet so easy to understand, that the way to be a man is to be a child.

But while humility is the quality to which attention was specially directed when our Saviour uttered the words of the text, there are other points of analogy between the traits of childhood and Christian character which it may be instructive to consider.

Children are forgiving; not it is to be supposed from virtuous principle, but because they are forgetful. Be this as it may, we know that an offended child cherishes no long resentments, and is soon pleased. The sleep of one night, or perhaps the lapse of half an hour or less, drowns in forgetfulness the vindictive feelings of the little one, and he is ready to receive friendly offers, or to make them. Referring to this, the apostle says: "In malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men." Not from lack of understanding, as may be the case with children, but with an under-

standing of all that is involved, with an understanding worthy of a man, be reconciled to thine adversary quickly. Thus in acting like a child, that soon forgets its wrath, you act not like a child, but like a God, who does not forgive merely because he forgets, but who forgets because he forgives.

But we turn to another point. Children are teachable. They never consider themselves too wise to be taught, and are not ashamed to be considered learners. He who would become a child of God, whatever his age, or however learned and wise, must humble himself, confess that he knows nothing as he ought to know, and sit down at the feet of Jesus, and at the feet of his disciples too, and learn. There is such a thing as pride of intellect. Men whose character is mature, and whose habits of thinking are formed, are apt to substitute their views, and what they call their philosophy, for the teachings of the Bible. All this must cease before they can enter the kingdom; not only so, they must be learners as long as they live. An affecting instance of this kind of intellectual humility is found in the case of Apollos, a man of transcendent eloquence, and mighty in the Scriptures, the splendor of whose rhetoric attracted, and the power of whose logic convinced, the gainsaying Jews. Notwithstanding his brilliant success, and the adulation that he doubtless received from admiring thousands, he was not ashamed to go to the house of the aged and humble Aquila and Priscilla, and, under the roof of this obscure but venerable couple, he learned the way of the Lord more perfectly. There is moral sublimity in the sight of this old man and his wife, so little thought of in this world, and at their feet the magnificent orator, Apollos, sitting like a little child—a learner! Beautifully and touchingly does this little piece of biography exhibit the childlike and teachable disposition of the follower of Jesus. So, haughty friend! versed in learning, and great in

wisdom, if you are not wise unto salvation, there is many a poor illiterate creature, and many a little child, whose teachings you would do well to listen to. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Until you have taken this first step, all your boasted attainments and gifts are worthless. Those who have taken this step, however scanty their knowledge in other respects, are capable of teaching you that which is infinitely more valuable than anything that you possess, or than the whole world can contain.

Another trait of little children is their confidingness. They believe what you tell them, without inquiring further. Every man ought so to receive the word of God. Faith is a necessity with childhood. If children would not believe the statements of their superiors, they could never obtain the data on which to base their own reasonings, and would remain forever undeveloped. In learning his letters, a child is told that a certain character is called A. Suppose that he doubts the statement, and demands the proof. It is manifest that while he is in this frame of mind he can never take the first step toward literary attainment. The Almighty has great lessons to teach us, and we are but children, very little children, before him. Nor can we ever attain to the sublime heights of heavenly wisdom, nor even learn its alphabet, without receiving the truth of the word as unquestioningly as the little prattler standing at parent's knee receives instruction from father or mother. Fortunately for him, his nature incapacitates him from doubt. But if little children, to their great advantage, regard human and therefore erring lips, as oracles, with what ready confidence should we receive the word of God! That wise providence which has made faith the necessary antecedent of a vast portion of the knowledge attainable in this life, has made faith instinctive with children. The instinct of the child should be the virtue of the man. It is no humiliation, it is his greatest glory, to

learn from the all-wise Teacher. How vain, how silly, and how hateful are those philosophic airs which men put on, poor creatures of a day, when they affect a wisdom superior to that which is revealed from heaven! If lack of faith in human authority would forever dwarf the intellect of childhood, what wretched stultification must come from want of confidence in infinite wisdom!

Perhaps one reason why children learn so readily is that they have no preconceived opinions, and no prejudices. If men would cast away their notions, and accept the word as they find it, many would enter the kingdom who, alas! will never see it. If men would come as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, they would surely grow thereby. If they come as philosophers, they come in vain.

Another point of view may be taken, slightly different from the last, yet enough so, perhaps, to warrant a distinction. Little children are happy in their parents' promises. They are never troubled with doubts, and they look forward with joyous anticipation to the fulfillment. No matter how good the promised boon, nor even how impossible it may seem, they expect it with certainty, and never cease looking for it until it comes. The same exulting confidence should all men entertain in the promises of God's word. Nothing is too much for God to promise; nothing is too great for God to do; nothing is too good for God to give. On this let us rest, and continue in happy expectancy until all be fulfilled.

It is a well-known habit of little children to remind their parents of their promises, and sometimes their importunity excites impatience and provokes command to silence. The example of the little ones, who never forget a promise, and never fail to urge it, with childish, but persistent logic, is for our imitation; and we are the more encouraged to this when we remember that God, unlike earthly parents, never grows impatient, and loves to be reminded of his promises. No



service that we can render is more acceptable. His mercy endureth forever; and thus in his very nature is there encouragement to pray without ceasing.

Another remarkable trait of children is that they are happy in their parents' society. The great disparity in years, and in every other respect, makes no difference; the little one is always eager to be folded to the parental bosom, where he nestles safe and happy. Especially is this the case when he is in trouble. The great soother of all the sorrows of childhood is to be taken up in parents' arms, and caressed. This is the affectionate and confiding joy of the Christian in communion with God. Earth has no delights so alluring as those of the closet and of the sanctuary. As little children cry for their parents, so, said the royal soldier-poet, who sat on the throne of Israel: "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Especially in the hour of adversity, the Christian turns from all the poor comforts this world has to offer, and looking to God as to a tender parent, asks, as it were, to be taken up and comforted "as one whom his mother comforteth." As the bruised child runs to his mother, and finds relief in her caresses, which soon makes him forget his little misfortune, so the Christian in his greater calamity flies, with his wounded and bleeding heart, to the bosom of his Divine Parent, and there finds comfort and consolation, which more than repay him for what he has suffered. Thus affliction itself, however sore, becomes a blessing; for it causes us to draw near to God, and in that nearness we find a joy which is more than a recompense for any pang that human nature is ever called to endure. All this is true; it is real; it is the actual experience of thousands, and will be testified to by a great multitude of the best men and women the world ever saw. What a blessed thing it is to be like little children! Alas! for him who knows nothing of this communion with God.

He is like a poor outcast child, who has no father, and no mother, and no home, and who wanders from place to place, and lives, and starves, and dies, unclad, unhoused, uncomforted, unpitied, unprotected, and alone! Oh, ye wanderers, when you come like little children to God through Jesus Christ, you will know what we mean when we speak of that sweet communion which exists between our Father in heaven and his children on earth!

Another feature, the reverse of what we have been considering, is worthy of our notice. Nothing makes a little child so miserable as parental displeasure. How many a man remembers the pangs that his mother's frown sent to his infant heart, and how he hasted to seek reconciliation on any terms, however humiliating, and thus relieved himself of the insupportable displeasure. And oh! the sunshine and the joy when the smile returned! Think of having given displeasure to the Almighty; and what joy can there be, with his frown following one through life? Come like the little child, and confess, and ask forgiveness, and be forgiven, and be happy.

But let us learn another lesson from these infant preachers. Little children feel a sense of their dependence, and look up to their parents for everything. They have no confidence in their ability to provide for themselves, and they never trouble themselves about it, relying wholly on parental care for support. The Christian, or he who would become one, must feel the same sense of dependence on God. Every man, saint and sinner, ought to have, and the true disciple does have, a constant, pressing sense of his own helplessness. The common blessings of life, the food that he eats, the raiment that he wears, he ought to regard, not as the products of his labor, but as gifts from God. Poor helpless dependent creature, you talk about your property, the products of your labor! Whence came your property? Whence your ability to labor?

Whence the blessing on your labors? Remember that however manly you may feel, you are really nothing but a child, and a very little child, before God, and that he has placed these things about you, compassionating your weakness.

As to things spiritual, our dependence on God is even greater, if such a thing were possible, than for things temporal. Perhaps the greatest point of difference between the saint and the sinner is this: that one feels, and the other does not feel, a sense of perfect helplessness, of entire and absolute dependence. The saint comes saying:

Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God! I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not,  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God! I come.

The sinner forgetting his helplessness, unmindful that the blood of the everlasting Covenant is the only antidote for sin, tries to make himself better, in order that he may be saved; just as if he could change his own moral nature; and just as if that would atone for the sins of the past, even if he were to succeed. A man must be convinced of the futility of all this before he can see the kingdom of heaven. One must become like a little child and feel absolutely helpless, and dependent wholly on sovereign grace for salvation. Good friend, you must not expect to save yourself in part, and leave the rest to God. You are like a very little child, like a babe of a day old, that cannot help itself at all. When you come to feel a sense of this imbecility, and put your soul, with confiding trust, in the hands of your Saviour, you will experience a joy for which earth supplies no parallel.

Let us consider another resemblance. Little children,

when they obey their parents, do so, not because they see the reasonableness of the command, but simply because it is a command. Now, our Father in heaven has not commanded us to do anything of which we cannot see the reasonableness. Yet there is a great difference between one who does a certain thing because he sees it to be reasonable, and another who does the same thing because it is commanded. In one, there is the spirit of true obedience; in the other, there is not. One obeys God, the other obeys his own impulses. In this respect we ought to be like little children. We have no right to parley with our Maker. We require prompt and unquestioning obedience from our children; we should render the same to our Father. When one is disinclined to discharge a certain duty, he is apt to see no reasonableness in it, and when he is called to that duty, he asks: "What good will it do? Is it essential?" Suppose one of your little children were to ask such questions; how unfilial, how vicious a spirit it would manifest, and how quickly your authority would be enforced! No little child ever asks such questions; and "except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." The child of God has no questions to ask about essentials and non-essentials. His only inquiry is: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

People sometimes excuse themselves from duty on the ground that they do not feel like it; and they seem really and sincerely to believe that this absolves them from obligation, or if not, that it at least diminishes guilt. The truth is, that it doubles guilt. They ought to feel like it, and they ought to do it. Here are two duties, and they discharge neither; and they imagine that failure in one is an excuse for neglect of the other. The experience of Christians in regard to the discharge of disagreeable duties is that the act of obedience superinduces pleasure in obedience, and that oftentimes, what was looked at with dread is done with

delight. The blessing of God comes on him who engages in the irksome task, and turns its pain to joy; and the serene conscience when all is over is a grand reward.

Men sometimes say: "If I do not feel like doing a certain thing, whatever it may be, that fact shows that my heart is not in it; and if my heart is not in it, I might as well not do it, for God looks at the heart; nay, it would be better not to do it, for the doing of the outward act without the concurrence of the heart, is hypocrisy: and, instead of honoring God, is insulting him." This is the sophistry of the pit; those who use it have evidently had help from Satan. Better far be like a little child, which is not cunning enough to invent ingenious excuses for disobedience, and knows nothing else than to obey. When Satan suggested to you that a painful or disagreeable duty discharged as an act of obedience to God is a thing done without the concurrence of the heart, then Satan lied. Nothing but the heart could ever incite a man to duty repulsive to him. The grandest triumphs of the spirit of obedience are when that is done which it is dreadful to do, but done because God commands. What soldier desires to charge a belching battery? But he obeys the order, and is promoted for gallantry on the field. Who desires to suck from a wounded limb the poison of a serpent? But he who does it is moved by high and noble impulses. Who covets the stake, and the faggot, and the flame? But the noble army of martyrs, who have died for the testimony of Jesus, are witnesses now that they who suffered with him are now glorified with him. Get thee behind us, Satan! with thy lying logic; we are not such babes in understanding as to be deceived by thy vile misleadings. To do duty when we feel like it, is easy; to do it when we do not feel like it, when it requires sacrifice, is the very heroism of the heart. Many a hard worker in some rugged field; many a woman, the victim of domestic abuse, faithfully obedient in distress

and bitterness, might well say, "I die daily"; and great will be their reward in heaven, for doing the very thing which Satan brands as hypocrisy! The spirit of unquestioning obedience, the spirit of little children, makes the grandest heroes of earth—or of heaven. Jesus Christ himself said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but the cup did not pass, and he drank it to the dregs.

A single point more, and this discourse will be closed. Children are growing, bodily and mentally, and daily tending towards mature and perfect development. Thus, the child of God must daily grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This growth ought to be so rapid and continued, as to be obvious, and excite remark. Often on meeting our children, or those of our friends, after a little separation, we exclaim with pleasing emphasis, "How they grow!" Thus in our hearts every good quality ought to develop, and fling its lustre around all our character and conduct, so that our friends on meeting us will be struck with our growth in excellence, and admire the expansive power of grace.

If any in whom no growth is manifest claim to be children of God, that fact is evidence that they are strangers to grace. All the children of our Heavenly Father grow. And as earthly parents watch with tender solicitude the growth of their little ones, and look on with glowing interest as they see their bodies symmetrically developed into forms of manly strength, or feminine beauty, and their minds unfold and ripen into maturity, so, only with infinitely greater complacency, does our Father in heaven regard the growth of his little ones, who pass from babes to the full stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and every day become more and more assimilated to the image of himself who begat them. In their early Christian life they are like tender olive plants around the table of the Lord, which he rears and cherishes;

but under his culture they become what Isaiah calls, "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

And now we close the scene. We have examined, part by part, the lovely figure placed before us by our Lord in his gentle instructions; let us look at it a moment taken in its entirety. The little child is (1) humble, (2) forgiving, (3) teachable, (4) confiding, (5) happy in the promises of its parents, (6) happy in their society, (7) unhappy in their displeasure, (8) dependent and helpless, (9) promptly and cheerfully obedient, and (10) daily growing to full manhood. How grand the character of the man which could be thus described! How strange that colossal greatness should be found in such a model! Who would have thought of such a thing but Jesus Christ!

Here is the test of discipleship. Happy they who come up to the model, for "of *such*," says the great Object-Teacher, of such in character and spirit, "Of *SUCH* is the kingdom of heaven."

Here too is the great alternative. Those whose character and conduct do not conform to the pattern, can never see eternal life. We must follow the copy or fall to ruin. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It was gracious goodness that placed the lesson on record for our instruction, and for our warning. It is a merciful providence, and a pleasing evidence of the divine love that teaches us the same lesson, in thousands of smiling and beauteous forms around us. The whole infant population of the globe are living oracles indeed, embodying in their nature a repetition of our Saviour's discourse.

Whenever hereafter you are surrounded at home by the children whom God has given you, or when as you walk the streets or fields, you meet the joyous little ones, let the

sight remind you of the teachings of Jesus, and remember, that in each one of these you behold one of nature's preachers, whose counsel, if you follow it, will lead you to the bosom of your Saviour and your God. But, oh, forget not the great alternative, the most solemn that was ever put before man: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."



## SERMON III.

### THE GREAT LAW.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ; . . . . And . . . . thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—MARK xii. 30, 31.

THE universe in which we live, and of which we are a part, is a universe of *law*. This fact is patent to our observation, so far as our observation extends. We witness the regular recurrence of day and night, the regular return of the seasons, the regular changes of the moon, the corresponding rise and fall of the tides, the unfailing regularity in the movements of the planets, the growth of plants and animals, the gravitation of ponderous bodies, and the countless combinations of chemistry, and innumerable phenomena of like character, all taking place with precision. We have not seen the entire universe, it is true; but the conclusion is irresistible to our minds that the same regularity pervades the whole of it. We cannot conceive of such a thing as that there should be any part of the universe where there is no law; where cause and effect are unknown; where sequences are either impossible or uncertain, and where all is chaos uncontrolled. We cannot dispossess ourselves of the conviction that wherever there is anything there must be some principle or power by virtue of which it exists, and which controls its modes or its action. We are also possessed with the unalterable conviction that wherever there is law, there must be a lawgiver. We trace the word *regular* back to its root in the word *rex*, which means *king*. *Rex*, the king; *regula*, the rule; *regularity*, the result of the rule. These words and the

ideas expressed by them are indissolubly connected together in our minds. Law is the expression of somebody's *will*, nor can we conceive of law in any other sense.

Moreover, we are so constituted that, when we see law executed, we cannot resist the belief that there is somebody to execute it. To execute is to *do*, and there can be no doing without a *doer*. If we believe that law exists everywhere, by the same rule we must believe that it is executed everywhere; for a law that is not executed is practically no law. And if law is executed everywhere, he who executes it must be everywhere, potentially at least, if not in fact. The law which controls the universe must be at least commensurate with it; nay, it must be superior to it; for law embodies in itself the idea of superiority; law controls; and that which controls must be superior to that which is controlled. He from whose will this law of the universe is but an emanation, must be superior to the universe, and to all that it consists of or contains. Whatever exists, exists by his will; surely nothing could exist in opposition to it; and surely he who gives life, with all its organs and functions, to creatures so small that we can scarcely see them with powerful microscopes, cannot be indifferent to anything. He must be Sovereign Lord. He must not only reign, but rule. He must rule in a sense in which no other being ever ruled anything; for his will lies at the bottom of all existence; each atom is the same to him as the entirety, and the entirety is the same to him as an atom. The Lord he is God, and beside him there is none else. The Lord sitteth king forever and ever. Amen and Amen!

It may be said that the laws which have been referred to are laws only of the physical universe, and operate only in ways that are mechanical. We have before us a universe of intellectual and moral beings, and we are a part of it. For this universe, for these beings, there must be law. Without

meaning to limit Omnipotence, we may ask: "Would it be possible for God to create them without law?" As they exist only *by* law, they can exist only *under* law. Could God create them and have no further will, nor thought, concerning them, and forget them? How could they exist when thus forgotten? The very fact that they live is proof to them that they are the subjects of law. So far as our race is concerned, their bodies, being material, are subject to law, like all other matter. Can we suppose that law is prescribed for the mere dust, and not for the spirit that inhabits it? Is it more important that inanimate matter should be controlled than that there should be rules of action for a living, thinking, sentient, potent energy? Do the power and will of the Great King extend only to the most inferior part of his creation, and not to its superior part? Is he careful of matter, and careless of mind? Is the spiritual universe beyond his dominion? To some extent, at least, beings who think and feel, and who have perceptions of right and wrong, are in his image; to some extent, at least, they are partakers of the divine nature. Are these to be left in a condition of lawlessness and anarchy and chaos, while brute matter, rocks, and clods are minutely cared for? The argument, *a fortiori*, once used by our Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount, comes in: "If God clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," much more will his vigilance be sleepless over creatures of infinitely higher dignity! God would not regard the less and disregard the greater. Men, in their weakness and folly, sometimes give their attention to trifles, while they neglect weightier matters. But God knows how to proportion his care, and to administer with wisdom. If he has exalted any of his creatures in rank, we may be sure that they are exalted in his esteem, and they will be the subjects of exalted law, adapted to their nature and to their possibilities.

When God made the physical universe, he pronounced it good. It excited his admiration, but not his affections. Incapable of thought or feeling, it could not reciprocate love, nor inspire it. That which cannot love can never be lovely. But moral beings are capable of love; and can, to some extent, appreciate the majesty and glory and excellence of their Creator. These, God can not only admire, but *love*; and that which is beloved of God must be precious indeed. Is it to be supposed that such creatures as these would be left to live, and have their being, under no fixed principles, and liable to infinite disorder and endless confusion? Are they to make no report to him, nor to any, of their doings? Are they made sensible of the distinction between right and wrong, and yet shall they have no law determining what is right and what is wrong? Are they to be responsible beings in nature, and yet irresponsible in fact? No! there is for them a law adapted to their nature; he who has never failed in any other adaptation has not failed in this; and if it were possible for one of God's laws to be more perfect than another, this would be the most perfect of all.

This morning's text contains the whole code. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There seems to be a little pleonasm in the expressions, heart, soul, mind, and strength; but without this, there would not be that fullness, completeness, and exhaustiveness, which the text embodies. It is a marvel of conciseness, and yet a marvel of comprehensiveness. These few words cover the whole ground, and describe the whole duty of man. Surely nothing more than this could be required; surely nothing less than this would be sufficient. The law is good; the law is wise; the law is right. It is exactly adapted to the nature of moral beings, having affections and dispositions such as ours. It defines, with

precision, the relations that ought to subsist between such beings and their Creator, whose affections and dispositions are exactly the same, only that his are infinite and holy ; and who is their constant benefactor, from whose loving goodness there proceed ceaseless floods of blessing on all his obedient creatures. It enters not into detail ; but it gives, in a word, one great underlying principle, which, if it be observed, will be sure to make all the details, to the minutest and extremist ramification, as perfect as the source whence they sprang. Like begets like ; and the offspring of love is love ; and love is the very name of God ; nay more ; the pen of inspiration declares that God *is* love. How can such a law be amended or improved ? Verily, says the Psalmist : “The law of the Lord is perfect.”

If this law is exactly adapted to our nature, which we know it is, for otherwise it would not have been given us, how noble must be that nature ! It is the sublimest law of eternity. We can conceive of nothing more glorious as emanating from the Infinite. And is this *our* law ? It is the grandest argument for the dignity of human nature as originally constituted, that we can conceive, or perhaps that is possible. Most surely any one of us who should conform to it would be the impersonation of all that could command the admiration of Infinite Intelligence, the approbation of Infinite Holiness, or that could be the object of Infinite Love.

“Do this and live !” Is the demand unreasonable ? Is not the law perfect ? Have not wisdom, and justice, and goodness, combined their forces to make it the purest and the best ? Have not all the attributes of Godhead united in the legislation of which this is the sum and the essence ? How can conformity to such law be anything else than *supremely* reasonable ? And how can violation of it be anything else than *supremely* unreasonable ?

“Do this and live.” Ah ! but it is hard to do ! It would

seem that it ought to be the easiest of all things to do. The amazing question is, How can one do anything else? The law is adapted to the nature that God gave us, with the same precision that marks all his works. Yet we find it to be the fact, that the law is hard to keep. This fact is proof, strong as proof can be made, that some overwhelming calamity has befallen us. We cannot keep such a law, so supremely excellent, so exactly fitted to creatures in our condition! What awful moral disaster has overtaken us? How came we to be hurled from our sublime eminence into this abyss of infamy? I know of no more overpowering argument to prove what is known as the doctrine of total depravity, than the fact, that we find this law hard to keep, which ought to be the easiest to keep. To keep it ought to be the most exquisite delight of human souls, which they should enjoy with burning, glowing, rapture; yet our hearts rebel against it; we struggle hard to keep it, fighting against ourselves; and yet we do not succeed; the task is impossible.

I know of no more irresistible argument to prove that we are not in the condition in which God made us, and that man is a fallen creature. Some change, some great, radical change has come over our nature since our first estate. If the Bible did not reveal it, the facts reveal themselves. On the one hand is the law, in its beauty, and majesty, and excellence; on the other hand, wonderful to behold, is our strange alienation from it! Some disturbing cause has produced a complete perversion of our nature—a complete reversal of all our moral forces. We are in position of antagonism to that law; and this is the only point on which the human race is unanimous.

Without inquiring what catastrophe produced this frightful revulsion, let us look at some of its results. Suppose that some one of our race had lived in exact conformity to the law for a thousand years, or for ten thousand, and had then

violated it in the least particular, and only for a moment. The fact that he had violated it *at all* would show that some principle had entered into his heart, averse to all that is good. A man's principles are himself, and he is the embodiment of them; and therefore *he* would be in an attitude of hostility to all that is wise, and pure, and good, and great. What happiness could there be in store for him? How could he ever again hold up his face in the presence of the holy? The disgrace would cling to him forever. The stain would sink into his soul, and blacken it through and through. He would be the object of loathing to all the just, and thrust from their association; his affections towards them, and towards God, would be reversed, and love would turn to hate; and thus, hating and hateful, he would career on from horror to horror forever.

Is it said that, although there was some evil in him, there was also much good in him; and that if he had the discredit of the one, he should have the credit of the other? The evil and the good cannot permanently exist together; one or the other must give way. If the good could not resist the evil when all was good, how much less could it resist when the barrier to evil has once broken down? If the dykes cannot resist the flood when they are sound, how much less can they do it when they are broken? Nothing is so impetuous as sin; and when it once finds entrance it comes rushing in like a mighty flood, devastating, overwhelming, and sweeping away to everlasting ruin.

So much for one violation of God's holy law in its least particular, and that, after a life of rectitude for a thousand years. Suppose that in an ordinary lifetime that law should be violated every day. What an accumulation of guilt! Suppose it were violated every hour in the day. What mountains upon mountains! Suppose that violation occurs with every breath one draws; suppose that the violation is

not only in minute details, but that it is of the whole length, and breadth, and height, and depth of the law; suppose that the wrong is not merely in what one does, or in what he does not do, but in what he *is*; that is, that his whole self is arrayed in enmity against the whole law in its entirety; then what? Language fails; conception breaks down; and our souls stand aghast in horror!

Yet this is the condition of every member of the family of man. Think you that I have overstated the fact? Then listen to the voice of inspiration. \* "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." To each one of you, my hearers, these words are addressed; and they describe the exact condition of every one of you.

Let us repent, then, of our sins, and God will forgive them. What good will repentance of sin do, unless you abandon it? Then, let us abandon it. That is one thing that you will never do. Have you ever tried to do it? Did you succeed? Are you not conscious that your heart is always full of it? We can at least weep over it! An ocean of tears would not wash away your guilt. Then let us pray; let us prostrate ourselves in the dust and cry out to high Heaven for mercy! mercy! mercy! What good would it do to cry for mercy, when, if you were to receive mercy, you would rise from the dust, and begin another career of violation of the law which says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" Picture to yourself a man trampling on this glorious law, and crying for mercy that he may be spared, to stamp it with his feet again!

What is our outlook for the future? Let us first ask what is the measure of our guilt? The guilt incurred by the violation of any law is always measured by the excellence,



dignity, and necessity of that law. This principle is recognized in all human legislation. There may be a law which protects some interest of society, not very important. The violation of such a law is called a misdemeanor, and is followed with some light penalty. But the violation of a law which protects some very high interest is called a high crime, and is punished with great severity; while the violation of a law which protects a vital interest is called a *capital* crime, and is justly punished with death. The principle on which this gradation of penalties is founded is a proper one, and commends itself to the best judgment of our race. The same principle holds good on a larger scale—on the largest. The guilt of every human being before God is measured by the dignity, excellence, and necessity of the law of God. That law—in its most glorious majesty, in its supreme excellency, in its sublime conformity to the character of God, the All-wise, Omniscient, and Eternal Legislator, in its perfect adaptedness to those for whom it was made—has been before us this morning. It is the law of all laws, the paramount law, concentrating in itself all perfection. A violation of this law, which is the foundation of God's government, is the highest crime that a moral being can possibly commit. It may be called a capital law—the capital law—the capital law of the universe; and hence its violation is a capital crime—the capital crime—the capital crime of the universe, concentrating in itself the essence of all crimes, including in itself all that is impious, profane, irreverent, sacrilegious, blasphemous, and abominable. The law and the guilt are at opposite extremes; if one is infinite in excellence, so is the other in turpitude. There is no other measure of our guilt than this infinite standard. What other measure would any one suggest? None other is conceivable. I know of no argument which shows more appallingly the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

But what should be the penalty of violating such law? The penalty is always in proportion to the guilt; and so it ought to be. What other proportion would any one suggest? If the guilt is infinite, the penalty must be commensurate with it. Human laws sometimes fail to carry adequate penalties with them; but we may be sure that divine laws are always armed with divine power. Above all, we may be sure that God's supremest and sublimest law has the omnipotence of God behind it. If physical sequences are certain and sure, and follow with mechanical precision, much more will moral sequences be certain and sure, and be measured out with infinite exactness. If obedience to God's highest law will secure his highest approbation, we may be sure that disobedience to the same will provoke his highest *disapprobation*. The curse and the blessing are the measure of each other. If to the loving, God's love gushes out like a cataract for impetuosity, and like an ocean for breadth and depth, bearing blessings on its eternal tide, so to the hostile, his wrath in equal volume will rush forth like a fiery flood, consuming, devouring, destroying, forever. O God! Thou art terrible from out thy holy places! This law is his holiest place; from out of this we may expect his greatest terror. If it be true that God is love, so also it is true that our God is a consuming fire. I know of no better argument, I may say no more terrific argument, to prove the total, awful, and everlasting destruction of the wicked, than the fact that they have put themselves in a position where the supreme law of God requires, in them, supreme vindication. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Do this, and live! Fail to do this, and die! Am I wrong? From the throne there comes a voice of thunder, saying, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Is it possible then, that the whole human race is doomed and damned? What shall we do? Ah! That is the question! What shall we do?

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## SERMON IV.

### *THE UNITY OF GUILT.*

“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”—JAMES ii. 10.

THIS appears to be a hard saying. Human nature rebels against it. Human reason protests, and says: “How can a man be guilty of that of which he is not guilty?” The very terms of the text, in its first clause, pronounce the man not guilty in regard to the whole law with the exception of one point; and in its second clause, though in the same breath, it reverses the decision that very instant announced, and declares that the man *is* guilty of the whole. We look for analogy in human laws. Suppose a man is proved to be guilty of violating the revenue laws, by smuggling, what kind of jury would that be which on this evidence, and this alone, would find him guilty, not only of smuggling, but also of arson, burglary, bigamy, perjury, highway robbery, murder, and every other crime on the statute book? Surely, we say, such a verdict would be most unrighteous and most absurd; and yet the word of God, or what professes to be such, finding a man guilty on one point only, declares him equally guilty of all the rest. Justice is an eternal principle, everywhere operative, and always the same; hence what is unjust on earth, is unjust in heaven; and to convict a man of all crimes, when he is guilty of but one, would be wrong both on earth and in heaven; and no point of location in the universe, and no period in eternity, could ever make it right.

The outrage upon justice appears the more conspicuous

when we perceive that it makes no gradations in guilt. He who, in an unguarded moment, has let fall a forbidden word; or who, for a single moment, has cherished an improper thought, which he instantly afterwards crushed, before it had ripened either into action, or into intention to act, is put in the same category with the diabolical wretch whose heart is thoroughly corrupt, and whose whole life is baptized in iniquity, transgression, and sin. This frightful agrarianism which makes no distinction between the thoughtless offender of a moment, and the life-long, deep-dyed, God-defying law-breaker and God-hater; which has but one level for all, and that level at the bottom of the bottomless pit of guilt, is a thing which no rational creature can accept, nor even listen to, without rising up, with boiling blood, in revolt.

I think it will be admitted that I have stated the view of the subject from the human stand-point, in as strong terms as the most violent objector could ask. Now what is to be said in reply? So far as Christian faith is concerned, no reply is necessary, except this: "*Thus saith the Lord.*" The man of God has so trained himself to habits of submission to the will and to the law of the Almighty, that it never occurs to him to question any of his decisions; and if questions be raised by others, the instant reply of his heart is this: "From the judgments of the Supreme Court of the Universe there is no appeal, there can be none, and there ought to be none. The Judge of all the earth will be sure to do right. Clouds and darkness may be round about him, but nevertheless, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. His ways are past finding out. His wisdom is infinite, and his justice is commensurate with it. I am but a worm of the dust, and am not qualified to review, much less to reverse, the decisions of the Eternal and Almighty Law-giver and Creator of the universe. If the unlettered *gamins* and vagabonds of the street were to revise

the decisions of our wisest, purest, and highest tribunals, with a view to their improvement, the audacious and preposterous forth-putting would be but a small offence by comparison. Nay: what my reason cannot grasp, my faith joyfully acquiesces in; blind myself, I trust infinite and all other concerns, with happy assurance, in the hands of the All-seeing; helpless myself, I call on the earth, and the isles of the sea, and on all created beings and things, to rejoice that "the Lord reigneth!"

Oh, happy man is he, who can thus, with child-like confidence, trust himself unquestioningly to the care of Infinite Wisdom, and of Infinite Love! His mind is not perturbed with doubts. He has no cares; his cares are all cast upon him who is able to bear them. In sympathy with God, the whole universe moves exactly as he would have it move; and thus he becomes himself almost a king, almost *the* king, invested as it were with the omnipotence, and every other attribute, of the Supreme. Thus, and thus only, by being in harmony with God, shall we be as gods.

How infinitely beneath this happy and exalted believer is the wretched man who resists the will of his Maker; who rebels against his authority; who questions his justice; who finds fault with his providence; who tries to amend laws which are out of his reach; who scoffs at what his feeble understanding cannot comprehend; who tries to set up a court of justice of his own, before which God is to be arraigned, and where the All-wise and the All-holy is to be convicted first of folly, and then of sin; and who, failing in this mad scheme, tries to ignore the existence of him who is the fountain of all existence, thus putting himself in perpetual antagonism with the Infinite! How ineffable is his folly! How contemptible is the littleness of what he supposes to be his greatness! How enormous his sin! How infinite his ruin!

But while it is true that the heart of the pure desires no solution of real or supposed difficulties in the known law of God, still, it is right that we should try to understand, so far as they can be understood, the principles which underlie that law, and the harmonies which must pervade it.

With the object in view, then, not of finding fault with God, but of putting ourselves in a position where we can see the majesty and beauty of revealed truth, let us investigate the subject before us.

In the first place, then, let us observe that the analogy between human law and divine law fails, for a radical reason. Human law deals only with the overt act; or at most, with the intention, as manifested by the overt act; and without the overt act, it is both professedly, and actually, inoperative. Divine law looks to the heart, and to that only. In the moral responsibility of moral beings to a moral God, the overt act is not the thing to be considered. The desire to commit the overt act, before the desire has ripened into intention, is the point under jurisdiction; or to express the same thought differently, the desire *is* the overt act in the eye of divine law; whereas to human law, mere desire, except when concrete with outward action, is invisible, intangible, and out of jurisdiction; its very existence is unknown, and often unsuspected. And again: human law does not arraign a man on a charge against his general character, but only on a specific charge, for a specific offence. But divine law holds a man responsible for his moral *condition*—for that state of his whole nature of which a specific offence is but the evidence, and not the substance. A single offence shows a carnal mind (Rom. viii. 6), and it is this carnal mind that is on trial.

Divine law reaches to the real guilt; human law reaches only to the outward expression of it; or changing the figure, the one deals with the substance, the other only with the

shadow. The one is exhaustive, dealing thoroughly with the whole subject of guilt, reaching to the very bottom; the other touches nothing but the surface, and touches even that only at a single point. Inasmuch, then, as human law and divine law deal with different things, operate in different spheres, and must of course proceed on different principles, any analogy drawn from one to the other must be drawn with care; there is liability to great mistake. What might be wrong in the one is not necessarily wrong in the other; and least of all, is human law, which is at best only a wretched imitation of the divine law, to be set up as the standard whereby the latter is to be judged. The copy must be judged of by the original; not the original by the copy.

The analogy now under consideration specially fails, for the reason already assigned, that in human law a man can be charged only with a particular offence, and of course can be convicted of that only; whereas divine law charges a man with that state of mind, with that moral condition of his whole nature, which made a single offence possible. To the divine law the overt act is only the foot-print of the crime, but to human law it is the crime itself. Hence, in human law the guilt can only be commensurate with that foot-print; whereas in divine law the guilt must be commensurate with the moral nature of him who is guilty; and therefore the finding in the one case overspreads the finding in the other, by just as much as the whole character of a man overspreads a single point in his history. In fact, in either case, the finding corresponds with the indictment. In the one case a man is indicted for doing a certain thing, and of course can be convicted only of *that*; in the other case he is indicted for being in a certain condition, and he can therefore be fairly convicted of *that*. Hence, what seemed to be the righteous indignation of human nature against supposed injustice, is an indignation for which there are no grounds; and is nothing



more than the silly ebullition of one, on a subject which he does not understand, which he has never fully investigated, and to which he has probably never given a serious thought. He is like a juror, who is ready and eager to give his verdict with enthusiasm and with fury, having heard nothing of the law and nothing of the facts. We may safely pass him by. Thus are the solemn deliberations of eternity, in a moment set aside by human nature, when it undertakes to judge in its own case.

Strong light is thrown on the whole subject when we remember, that the law of God is an indivisible unit—it is the expression of his will—it is the assertion of his authority—it is himself *uttered*. Any sin impinges on this unit; any sin resists this will; any sin rebels against this authority; any sin is antagonism to God; and antagonism to God is being at opposites with *all* that is good, and with *all* that is great, and with all that must prevail. God and sin are the opposite poles, of all that can be conceived of, and of all that *is*; and he who clings to the one must be infinitely removed from the other. The Apostle James evolves this thought, in the verse next to that from which our text is taken. Explaining the reason of the statement, that he that offends in one point is guilty of all, he says: “For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill: now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” God’s authority is set at naught as really in the one case as in the other, as really in either as in both, or as in all. The spirit of disobedience and of insubordination to authority is the thing for which we are to be tried, and that spirit may be proved by one crime as well as by another. We speak of sins as if they were many, and in a sense, sins are many indeed; but when we regard sin in its essence and stripped of its accidents we find that it is a unit; that there is but one

sin, that there *can* be but one,—the violation of the law of God. There are many ways of committing it, but that which is committed is always the same. He who has violated this law has committed sin, *the* sin, the *only* sin, which either he, or any other moral being, is capable of committing; he has exhausted the possibilities of guilt.

The law is like a circle which if broken in one point is a circle no more, it is *all* destroyed; the law if broken at all, with impunity, is no longer supreme, and if not supreme, it might as well be destroyed altogether. It is necessary to the peace, and to the very existence, of the universe, that *something* should be supreme; and if the law of God is not so, it is clear that nothing else can be; hence any sin, even the least, has in it the elements of universal destruction.

Or again, the law of God may be compared to a floating vessel which must be water-tight, and which a single leak will destroy as effectually as innumerable leaks. A passenger on such a vessel, having willfully caused one such leak, need not show bloodless hands, and declare that he is innocent of cutting the throats of his fellow-passengers, and of robbing them. In that one act of springing that leak, he has included all other acts that involve supreme guilt. God's holy, righteous, perfect, and unbroken law is the only ark of safety for all beings and things. Its integrity must be preserved, for a single flaw would be fatal. Hence, he who has violated it in the least has committed a capital crime, which includes in itself the essence and the elements of all crimes; and which tends as much to universal ruin, as if all crimes had actually been committed.

We must remember too that God is a personal God; that he is not an abstraction, not a mere principle, to be described by the word *it* rather than by the word *he*; that he is not a mere creature of the imagination, but that he is an actual living Being—a real Person, a Person like ourselves, with

thoughts, feelings, intentions, and will. A violation of his law is an insult to *himself*; and if insulted at all, it is his whole being that is insulted. He at least is an indivisible unit, and it is impossible to insult and outrage a part of him only, leaving the rest of his person unaggrieved. It is the living God, the entire God, who is set at naught, and defied by sin, and a single sin puts us in opposition to him as really and completely as any number of sins.

We must bear in mind also, that man himself is an indivisible unit. It is not a part of the man that sins; it is the whole man. Sin is simply an expression; but an expression of what? Of character. The law of God is also an expression—an expression of character. And the expressions being in conflict, the characters which are so expressed are in conflict; the two personal units are at variance; the parties are at war with each other; and one sin is as much a declaration of war, of war against God, as all possible sins could be.

We may be permitted humbly and reverently to illustrate our relations to God by our intercourse with each other. Suppose one man insults another; suppose the insult to be of the most aggravated character, and one which stings honor to the quick, and rouses the whole nature of the man insulted. It would be in vain for the aggressor to say: "I have not offered him all possible insults, I have not injured him in as many ways as I might have done; in fact, I never even insulted him except once." How well might the outraged man reply: "I do not care to inquire into the whole biography of the creature; I know enough of him, his one act, even if it were not followed by this cool intensification of it, is a representative act; it stands for all acts; it shows what he is capable of, and what his nature is, and what stuff he is made of; the greater includes the less, and the present outrage includes all other outrages; it is broad enough to cover the whole ground; it reaches forward and backward,

and covers his whole life, and puts mortal hatred between me and him." The illustration fails; it fails in this: that in the one case the parties are both *men*, and consequently no outrage that one could offer to the other would be greater than an equal could offer to an equal. But when one of the parties is a creature of yesterday, whose breath is in his nostrils, and the other is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Almighty, and Ever-living Jehovah, who made heaven and earth; when it is the Infinite Majesty of him who inhabits eternity that is insulted by one of his creatures, the crime is of infinitely higher grade than one created being could possibly commit against another; the issue made is immeasurably more tremendous; the chasm between the parties is one that has no shores; all the rest of the wretched creature's life is lost sight of; that one act blackens the whole of it; the moral debauchery stains him all over; his soul is buried in the baptism of guilt; there is nothing to be seen of him but crime; and no created intelligence has patience to inquire what he was, or what he did; if he had any virtue, it is thrown into dark and dismal eclipse by one dreadful deed; one issue is enough to make with the law of Almighty God; as that law is eternal, the issue is eternal; as that law is infinite, the issue is infinite. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." For ever lost, forever sunk in infamy, and in despair, is he who violates one jot or one tittle of it.

When the law was announced from Sinai, neither man nor beast dared to touch even the border of the mount; for if reasoning man or even unreasoning beast touched even the border of the mount, which, after all, was only earth up-heaved, the penalty was death; so holy, so awful, was that place. But if the mere announcement of the law made that pile of up-heaved earth as holy as heaven, the unlawful touch of whose border was death, what inconceivable majesty

must there be in the law itself; and what eternal death must be visited on him who tramples on it, or who touches it, even if he touch it but once. A single touch, one single touch, with but the tip of the finger, on the border of Sinai, would have doomed to death the audacious and God-defying man who dared thus to brave the Almighty; nor is the law of God any less carefully to be guarded against infringement than the mere spot of earth where it was proclaimed. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

And now is not every mouth stopped? Angels and glorified spirits have nothing to say. There is silence in heaven, for there are none there to controvert the law of God. And there ought to be absolute, as there is partial, silence on earth; but in the stillness I hear a feeble whisper. I hear human nature whispering, "Ah, but, after all, there must be a difference. There must be grades in guilt. It cannot be that he who has committed but one sin in a whole life time is in the same condition with him who has done nothing else but sin during his whole life." And even quoting Scripture, as Satan impiously did in attempting to confound the Son of God, the whisper tells of one to be beaten with many stripes, and another to be beaten with few; and tries to infer from this that a *few* touches of the mount, especially if they had been *light* touches, would not have been fatal, the word of God to the contrary notwithstanding, repeating Satan's blasphemous contradiction, "God doth know that thou shalt *not* surely die." The hiss of the serpent is heard to this day.

Let us allow to human nature all that it can possibly claim. Let us admit, that he who has committed a single sin is not so wicked as he who has committed a thousand. But why talk about him who has committed a single sin, when there is no such person, and never was, and never will be, and never can be? It is impossible in the nature of things, that any creature can commit one sin, and one only.

Eternity can never witness such a phenomenon as that; unless indeed the Almighty, on the very instant of the first sin, should smite the sinner into nothingness. Sin breeds sin. In each sin there is a prolific womb, that contains the germs of a thousand more; and each of the germs contains germs, and these again contain other germs. Sin is homogeneous throughout; it is all of the same character and nature; and each part, and parcel, and particle of it contains all the elements, and all the powers of reproduction, and self-multiplication, and self-perpetuation, that the whole of it does. It is like leaven, any part of which is virtually equal to the whole of it.

Suppose, then, that human nature, with which I argue, should concede that there is no such thing as a sinner of a single sin, but claims that, after all, there is a difference between the pale-lipped trembling tyro of tender years in sin, and the hardened villain of three score years of guilt. Let us yield to human nature all the ground that can be asked.

If the kingdom of heaven may be likened to leaven placed in meal, so also may the kingdom of darkness. Suppose, then, that there be two measures of meal, in two separate vessels. In one of these, leaven was placed long ago, and now the whole of it is leavened. In the other the leaven has been placed but recently. Probably, the two are not in all respects in the same condition—*now*. But in the essential point, they *are* in the same condition even *now*. The one is itself a mass of leaven, it is true; and the other is not; but it *will* be, for it has the same principle in it. There is no salvation for it. It cannot take the leaven out of itself. It cannot keep the leaven from doing its work; it cannot resist the inevitable. Its final state is only a question of time; and its present state does not differ in real essence from its final state. For to begin the process of leavening is virtually to

finish it. It is one of those things the end of which is wrapped up in the beginning. For the moment, there is a certain kind of difference between the two measures of meal. But if taken for all time, there is no difference between them. If they were to last for eternity, that difference that existed between them for a moment, would be lost sight of; and, taken altogether, it matters not which had a moment the start of the other. Nor will it make any difference in the final result, if one of the two was leavened by a single particle of leaven, and the other by a hundred great lumps of it. They are absolutely the same in the end, and were essentially so from the beginning.

Suppose these two measures of meal to represent two moral beings, subjects of moral discipline, and to be treated for an immortal life; how else could they be treated justly than to be treated alike? The question to be decided in the case of every human being is, not how much of the leaven of sin there is in his heart, nor how little, but whether he has *any*; and if he has any he has all. Each sin, however small, contains in itself the *principle* of disobedience to God;<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup>The doctrine urged was discovered by a heathen philosopher, without the aid of revelation. Hear what Cicero says: "The fact in which the sin consists may be greater in one instance, and less in another, but the guilt itself, in whatever light you behold it, is the same. A pilot loses a ship laden with gold, or one laden with straw; in value there is difference; in the fault of the pilot, none. . . . Guilt can be made neither greater nor less. . . . All vices are equal. . . . Virtue is uniform; nothing can be added to it to make it more than virtue; *nothing can be taken from it and the name of virtue be left.* Everything unlawful is heinous, even the most trifling thing. . . . What influence can more deter men from every kind of evil, than if men become sensible that *there are no degrees in sin!*" — *Cicero's Third Paradox.*

If Cicero had read the New Testament, he would probably not have expressed himself *exactly* as he did, but his thoughts are evidently on the New Testament line, to wit: that the outward act is only the expression of an inward principle, and the principle is the same, whether expressed in a whisper or in tones of thunder.

in this statement, two important points are involved : First, If the *principle* is in all cases the same, then he who offends in one point has impliedly and virtually been guilty of all. But in addition to this constructive guilt, Secondly ; He in whose heart and nature this principle is found will, and *must* in due time actually and literally, be guilty of all sins that are possible to him. For if the impulses that move a man to sin are strong enough to prevail over the restraints that keep him from it when he is perfectly virtuous, much more will those impulses prevail over those restraints when he has ceased to be virtuous. If the man failed when all that was in him was good, and none of it bad, much more will he fail when the bad has come in to weaken his restraints, and strengthen his impulses to evil. Thus one sin makes it easy for another to enter. . And if one sin can introduce one other, the two together can still more easily introduce a third. It will be more easy to commit the fourth sin than the third, and immensely more so than to commit the first. And thus there is a perpetual accumulation of power on the side of the wrong, and a perpetual loss of power on the side of the right. Philosophy can see no end to this progressive series of horrors, leading downward and deathward. There was sound philosophy and true theology in the verse of the Roman poet when he said : “ Easy is the descent to evil, but to recover the step, *there* is the impossible ! ” And this morning’s text instead of baffling our philosophy, as a superficial thinker might suppose, confirms all philosophy, both ancient and modern.

But the inspired writings teach us this truth not merely in language which might be misinterpreted ; as if to guard against mistake, they embody the same doctrine in the statement of historic fact, thus illustrating the principle by actual experiment. It was not needful that our first mother should have devoured *all* the fruit upon the forbidden tree to bring



death upon the race. It was enough that she but tasted it, and but once. That crime contained in itself the seeds of all crimes. From it has sprung a world of sin, and a guilty race. The spirit of fear sprang from that guilty act, and our parents hid from God. The spirit of shame came from it, and they hid from each other and covered themselves. The spirit of deceit came upon them, and they tried to excuse themselves. The spirit of unbelief came upon their posterity, and Cain offered a sacrifice with no blood in it; the spirit of envy came upon him when he saw that his brother was preferred; the spirit of murder leaped forth from this; and from that day to this hour has never ceased to drench the earth with brothers' blood. And from the first moment when the air of Paradise was tainted with sin, the whole atmosphere of the earth, for six thousand years, has been corrupted with lies and with uncleanness and with blasphemy. It was "the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal *taste* brought death into the world and all our woe." Oh, that one crime, that has damned the human race, with its thousands of millions, is a witness before God and men and angels, with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, proclaiming to all time and to all eternity that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

From the teachings of this text we derive important instruction on what is known among theologians as the doctrine of total depravity. Men resist this doctrine, and declare that they are not as bad as they might be; that they are not as bad as others are; and that no man can be as bad as the fallen angels are, for whom the bottomless pit was dug. They forget that those angels were once pure, which none of us have ever been, and that one act of rebellion led to their present state and plunged them into their fiery lake. The same principle that makes them fit inhabitants of their dark

abode will make men so. All that men claim may be admitted, and still the doctrine is true, that their moral nature, if they be sinners at all, is in a state of total ruin. It is true that they are not as bad as they might be, nor as bad as they will be; but they are under the operation of causes which will work to their moral disadvantage, with accumulating power forever and ever. Such ruin as this is total. All depravity is total; *any* depravity is total. Here, in this world, sin has not worked out its final result; and men are not totally depraved, in the sense that sin has done them all the harm it can do; but they *are* totally depraved, in the sense that the principle of eternal death is in their nature. O wretched man, how lost is thy condition!

Another lesson to be learned is this: We see how vain it is to try to atone for one violation of God's law, by keeping that law in other respects. We may travel partly round the circle of duty, but if that circle is broken, our measure of duty is incomplete, nor will any number of rounds over that which is unbroken mend that which is broken. One sin is a blow at God; and nothing that a man can do can atone for having struck his Maker in the face. The recoil of that blow must be damnation to the man, with all his so-called virtues clinging to him.

But another lesson of most appalling character is to be learned. Take a man, honest, honorable, truthful, upright, benevolent; take a woman, pure, chaste, amiable, gentle, meek, the embodiment of all loveliness; take some guileless youth, hitherto unspotted from the world; take some sweet girl, pure as a lily, the light of the household, a living joy; take a little child, innocent as we use the word, the heaven-sent prattler of the fire-side; and what is the difference between any one of these, and the lost spirits, the sin-saturated souls, hating and hated, cursing and cursed, blaspheming and damned, that writhe in perdition? It is the difference be-

tween meal fully leavened, and meal just beginning to be leavened. It is only a difference of time, and of development. Essentially, there is no difference. It is impossible that sin should not diffuse itself. We looked just now at the experience of earth, beginning with the sin of Eden. Let us look to the upper and also to the lower world, and we shall see that there, as well as on earth, the principle holds good, and that it is illustrated by facts antedating the creation of the world. A single sin found its way into the heart of a glorious angel in heaven, and now he is known as the Devil—the father of lies—the arch-enemy of God and man. Think of his varied experiences; first for ages, for aught we know, the experiences of heaven, in the presence of God, a companion, and a *fit* companion of the pure and the blest, of cherub and seraph, that burn before the throne—then the experiences of chains, darkness, and damnation! One sin transformed that almost adorable person into the magignant fiend, the embodiment of all that is hateful, of all that is loathsome, and filthy, and accursed. Once he was at God's right hand, and now he is crushed under the heel of the Almighty. What is to prevent sin from having the same effect in us that it had in him? The principles that underlie good and evil must for ever work out the same results. Like causes, with like circumstances, must produce like results. If there be difference in our circumstances and his, it is a difference not in our favor. In the very nature of things, sin must always produce the effect of sin, and never the effect of anything else. The effect of sin—of any sin—is to alienate from God, to put us in an attitude of hostility to him, and to rouse his wrath against us; and this is perdition. The effect of sin, of *any* sin, is to lead to other sin, and of this again to lead to more sin and to all sin; and this is perdition. Men are therefore virtually in perdition already. True, the final catastrophe has not yet taken place. But if two men were to fall from

some lofty precipice of inconceivable altitude, and one of them lay mangled and bleeding on the craggy rocks below, and the other were but just beginning to slide helplessly down, without a straw to cling to on his downward, dreadful, and fatal career, the difference in the condition of the two men would exactly illustrate the difference between the state of the amiable unbeliever in the congregation, and that of the spirits of the doomed and damned. Oh, is it possible that these bright and lovely faces are but masks of the demon within? that these dear ones whom we fold to our bosoms are fiends in disguise, and that they are at this very moment in the incipient stage of perdition? Is there no difference between them and the lost dwellers in the lake of fire, except the difference between young serpents and old serpents? And the answer comes by apostolic lips from heaven, echoed back by the facts of Eden, re-echoed back again by the facts of heaven, and of hell: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL"!

And is there no escape? O righteous law of God, is there no mercy? And the law answers: "No—the soul that sinneth it shall die." O philosophy! is there no relief in thee? And philosophy but confirms what needed not to be confirmed—the word of God. O my soul! canst thou not save thyself? My soul is dumb. Angels, save me! From them I hear nothing but this: "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Holy and just are thy ways, O Lord God Almighty." I hear little ones crying: "Father, save me! Mother, save me!" But fathers, mothers, and children are all alike swallowed up in the same ruin, all equally struggling in the same gulf, whose dark waters, rushing on to eternity, bear its living burden on to perdition!

O Sun of righteousness! now dost thou arise, to bespan this roaring flood with thy bow of hope. "God so loved the

world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is salvation for the lost. It is not in man. His struggles only sink him deeper in the treacherous tide. It is not in angels; they are but the ministers of God's will. It is not in the law of God. That is unalterable, inexorable, and eternal. It is in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If there be salvation, it must be vicarious; and so it is. When Justice drew its flaming sword, he who was appointed from the foundation of the world bent his neck to receive the blow, and he did receive it. And we have but to trust in him. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

But is it not still true, that he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all? Yes, forever true; but the great revelation from heaven is that it is in the power of Omnipotence to re-create a man, so that he who was guilty is now not guilty. There is a means of being cleansed from sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Washed in the blood of the everlasting covenant, not a single point of offence will be left in us. The Holy Spirit, by the blood of the atonement, will make us innocent. The spirits of the just will be made perfect. We shall be made fit to sit on thrones, to judge the angels. The law cannot be changed, but we can be changed. The law will never cease, but we shall be put in such condition as not to be amenable to it. Here, then, lost, perishing souls, is salvation for you. Be sure there is salvation nowhere else. It is a miracle to find it even here. Be sure there is no other miracle like this. Jesus Christ is the hugest miracle of eternity. If he cannot save, then there is no Saviour; and if so, then we must either be lost, or, if not, then saved on our own merits; and this last would be the greatest miracle of all; this would abrogate all law, all law of morals, and all law of nature. The legislation of the Infinite and of the Eternal must all be

repealed; the statute book of the Almighty must be annihilated. *That* miracle will never be. But the lesser miracle of a vicarious Saviour *is*. And shall we reject the Lamb of God that taketh away the *sin* of the world? Do we prefer perdition to his loving arms? The dying man and the living God united in one—in one glorious Person—the heaven-ordained Saviour of the race—shall we scorn eternal life because it comes from him? Will we not have it unless we can work it out for ourselves, and that, too, when we know that we cannot work it out for ourselves? In our extremity; in our lost and ruined state; having offended, not only in one point, but in many, any one of which involves the principle of all; fallen and doomed and virtually damned, Jesus Christ, the impersonation of infinite love, appears and says: “Throw yourself into my arms.” But what evidence have we that he is able to save? Evidence! We want no evidence other than is embodied in the nature of the facts. Take the historic personage. His very look authenticates him as a messenger from the skies. His character is its own witness; and if it were not, his works are his witnesses. I risk myself with joy on him whose face beams with the brightness of the Father’s glory, and who is himself the express image of his Person. Drowning men catch even at straws, but this is no straw. This is the Rock of Ages. This is he who from eternity was appointed to save. He speaks to us, and says: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” And I answer him:

Jesus, lover of my soul!  
Let me to thy bosom fly,  
While the raging billows roll,  
While the tempest still is high.  
Hide me, O my Saviour hide,  
Till the storm of life be past;  
Safe into the haven guide,  
Oh, receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on thee ;  
Leave, ah ! leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me.  
All my trust on thee is stayed,  
All my help from thee I bring ;  
Cover my defenceless head,  
With the shadow of thy wing !

And I know that every word of this prayer will stir the depths of the Infinite, and that we of ten thousand offences shall be made pure and holy, and that when we appear before the throne, it will be said : "These are they that have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; and the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Amen and amen !

Now when we look at the inexorable relentless law which condemns us in all, if guilty in any, bitter tears are wrung from our eyes, and our heart-strings quiver with anguish and with dread ; but when we look to Calvary, and see the bleeding Lamb, whose blood at once satisfies law and cleanses us, our tears flow apace and afresh, but now not bitter tears—sweet tears ; our hearts palpitate again, but it is with hope and love and joy : and in God's good time all tears will be wiped from our eyes ; all our perturbation will subside ; and the serene complacency of an eternity with God will diffuse rapture, softened into calmness, through our souls, and our song forever will be, CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS !

## SERMON V.

### *THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT.*

“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”—**HEBREWS ix. 22.**

WHEN we speak of the law of God, we refer to that system of precepts, with penalties annexed, which sets forth his will as to our moral condition and conduct. Every human being of responsible age has violated this law many times. As shown in a former discourse, a single violation of any part of this law is equivalent, in its results, to continued and ceaseless violation of the whole of it. Consequently, so far as *law* is concerned, that is, so far as *this* law is concerned, every responsible member of the race is doomed to all the penalties which that law carries with it. We are assured however, in the Scriptures, that there is a mode of escape from these penalties; not that the law can be set aside, or that its operation can be suspended, but that it can be satisfied; satisfied in another way than by inflicting its penalties on us; and this method of satisfaction is called the gospel; appropriately called the gospel—that is, good news. We commonly speak of law and gospel as if they stood in the relation of antithesis to each other; and so in a certain sense they do; for under the latter we can be saved, while under the former we cannot. But really they must be harmonious; for all that proceeds from God must be consistent with itself. A court of equity is not intended to contravene law, it is only a better method of administering law, and itself is law; for in the bosom of the law-making power, the distinction between law and equity, except as methods of attaining justice, does not exist. The illustration may be a feeble one; still it shows what



is meant when we say that in its relation to the divine nature, the gospel must be law, as really as that which is known to us as law. The principles of what we call law we can easily understand. We know the distinction between right and wrong; and we know that the things commanded are right, and that those forbidden are wrong; and we can see the reasonableness of corresponding rewards and penalties. But the principles of that higher law, of that equity which we call gospel, are wholly beyond our comprehension. We are told that God intends to forgive, and exalt, and sanctify, and glorify some of those who have violated his law, and that others, some of them belonging to our own race, and some belonging to a different class of beings, he never will forgive, but will consign them to that eternity of woe which they deserve; but which they deserve no more than those whom he intends to forgive and save. Now, why it is that he should utterly destroy some men, and the devils, while he welcomes others just as bad to the joys and glories of heaven, we do not know. Of course it is wise and right, and consistent with the divine character, and therefore in all its aspects according to law; for God can do nothing contrary to his own law; but the principles of that law are wholly out of our reach. We can only say: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

There are those who repudiate this higher law, this gospel, on the ground that it does not comport with their ideas of justice. We can only say to such, that the Almighty will judge them, but that they have neither the right, nor the power, to judge him. They are not competent to administer the affairs of so great a universe as this, and he is. He has revealed his gospel to us, and without understanding, we still accept, and joyfully embrace it.

We are told furthermore, that in carrying out this higher law, God in the plenitude of his personality, identified him-

self with a member of our race, even with the son of Mary, whose name was Jesus;<sup>1</sup> and also that the death of this man who led a sinless life was a complete satisfaction to what we call law, so far as relates to all who believe in Jesus. Now how it is that the death of the innocent should atone for the sin of the guilty, we do not know. But such we are assured in the Scriptures is the fact. If it be a fact, the announcement of it is good news indeed. With grateful, glowing hearts, we accept the fact, and here again, we say: "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." We do not understand why it is, that the wicked are blest, for the righteous' sake; but as it is the *fact*, we simply thank God for it. Nor are we anxious to inquire into the reasons of it; for if God is satisfied with it, surely we who are its beneficiaries have no cause to complain. Complaint would come better from any others in the universe, than from us. Instead of trying to fathom the philosophy of it, it would be wiser to avail ourselves of its benefits. It is as foolish, as it is wicked, to ask to be let into all the divine secrets before we accept the divine mercy. In worldly matters, nobody does this. We never hear of one who refuses to eat bread, because he does not understand the principle of life in the germ of the wheat from which the bread was made. We partake of the bread of eternal life just as we do of our daily bread; understanding the philosophy of neither. Our first office, in either case, is to accept the facts, and afterwards to inquire into the philosophy of the same, so far as we may be able; but in no case do we let go our hold on the facts.

We should never have thought of such things, as thousands of the phenomena which we see around us; but as they

<sup>1</sup>Not that the divine nature was superimposed on the human, as some have taught, but that the human was identified *ab initio*, with the divine—created in a state of blendedness. "That which is conceived. . . is of the Holy Ghost." Matt. i. 20.

are before our eyes, we investigate their nature and their functions with pleasure and with profit; and we find much that we understand, and more that we do not. This last we pass by; the rest we enjoy. So also we should never have thought of such a thing as that the sacrifice of one innocent man should save and glorify many guilty; but as the fact is set before us in the word of God, it is proper for us to inquire, so far as we can, into the harmony of the fact with the law and nature of God.

We are told that "without shedding of blood is no remission," that is, no forgiveness. Thus we are taught that on the condition of bloodshed, forgiveness is possible, and that without it, forgiveness is impossible. The blood that is referred to is the blood of Jesus Christ, a sinless man, whose human nature was, in some mysterious and incomprehensible way, combined, identified, and unified with the Mighty God, so that the person known as Jesus Christ is a proper object of religious homage, of the profoundest homage possible to human beings.

Now why should the shedding of the blood of this glorious Person be necessary to the forgiveness of sin? Some light may be thrown on the subject by a view of the justice of God. God's justice must be infinite, unchangeable, eternal; incapable of compromise, or of any qualification or modification; it must be absolute. True, goodness and mercy are his attributes, but these cannot modify the action of his justice; nor indeed can any attribute be exercised at the expense of another. The nature of God implies the harmonious exercise of all his attributes together. God is one; and unity runs through all his operations. Now if justice is absolute, how is it possible that God could set a sinner free by a mere act of forgiveness? This might be mercy, but would it be justice? A judge who has taken an oath to punish certain crimes, must punish them. His feelings and

sympathies may forbid; but whatever these may be, he is bound by his oath. The perfections of the divine nature are illustrated by the oath of the judge. God cannot allow the guilty to escape in contravention of *law*. The law is, that belief in the blood of him who died, the just for the unjust, is a satisfaction of its demands; and that without this belief there is no satisfaction, and that consequently, the sinner must endure the penalties of his own guilt. Without this, forgiveness is impossible. The law requires blood. The higher law substitutes the blood of Christ for ours. If this be rejected, the other law must take its course.

It may be said that justice, so far as relating to the sinner, may be seen in the plan set forth; but where is the justice to him who suffered without having sinned? We may reply, that no injustice is done to one who is *willing* to do what is done. If one offers himself as a substitute for a soldier, and is killed in battle, it may be his misfortune, but no injustice is done by the government in whose service he engaged, and no complaint of this kind would ever be thought of. Christ was willing.

The only wonder is that God should be satisfied with his death in place of ours. It must be admitted that this is very wonderful. But as it is the *fact*, we shout thanksgivings in view of it. After all, it is no more wonderful than the fact that we exist, or that anything exists.

The doctrine set forth may be objected to on the ground that it shows God to be incapable of doing that which we ourselves can do. We can forgive an injury without any satisfaction having been rendered, either directly or indirectly, and we do frequently forgive in this way. Now if we poor, imperfect, creatures can forgive so freely, cannot God, who is perfect, do the same thing? No. Nor does it follow that a doctrine is false because it teaches or implies that we can do some things that God cannot do. We can do many

such things.<sup>1</sup> The apostolic expression, "It is impossible for God to lie," is the key-note to all that need be said. Perfection implies the impossibility of many things which are possible to the imperfect. We can increase in knowledge and in wisdom; but of course this is impossible with God. We can grow in grace; but his holiness is infinite from the beginning. We can look up to a Superior Being, but God has no superior. So, coming to the point before us, we can forgive without regard to justice; but no such thing is possible to God. He has never disregarded justice, and his nature forbids that he ever should do so. In some incomprehensible way, his mercy and justice must go together. We might even say, perhaps, that his mercy is nothing but justice operating in a certain direction; and that his justice is nothing but mercy, operating in a certain direction. At any rate, all his attributes must be exercised in harmony. We can yield to our compassionate feelings, and decline to administer what we know to be justice; but with God, whose character is the perfection of sublime and eternal symmetry, there can be no passing by of crime as though it had not been committed. There is forgiveness, but it is not at the expense of justice. It is not without the shedding of blood. If Christ had not died, there would have been, there *could* have been, no forgiveness. Justice required penalty; and in this there is nothing wonderful. Mercy provided a substitute for us. This astounds us, it is true; but why should it, when we remember that his mercy is infinite? The substitute satisfies the law. This, while we are in our present state, we can

<sup>1</sup>Furthermore, we are *commanded* to forgive; and this command itself prohibits us from the administration of moral justice to offenders; God has reserved that function for himself. Herein is displayed his wisdom. He knows that we are not competent to administer justice, while yet we are capable of forgiveness; and for this he gives us grace. Justice and mercy together can be administered by none but himself.

never understand. We cannot see the point where mercy and truth are met together, where righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Nor have we any curiosity. What is satisfactory to God is satisfactory to us. We can see, however, in what has been said, the necessity of an atonement. Without this bloodshed, the claims of justice would have been entirely ignored; with it, we see that justice is recognized; that its claims are respected; and that an offer of most extraordinary nature is made to it—the sacrifice of a sinless man identified in person with the Great Creator of heaven and earth.

We may learn something from a view-point slightly different. The honor of God would seem to make it impossible that there should be forgiveness of sin without antecedent sacrifice. If he passes by sin without even noticing it, the eternal principle of right seems to have been set aside. Can God forsake his own principles? If he allows his authority to be trampled on with impunity, the inference would seem to be that he regarded that authority as not worth vindicating. There would seem to be a loss of self-respect. What would be thought of a human government that would voluntarily, and publicly, abandon the enforcement of its own laws? Would it not bring itself into contempt? God's law is exceeding broad; and it has been violated in thousands of ways, for thousands of years, by millions of people. If he were to shut his eyes to all this and allow all this crime to pass as though it had not been, his administration would be so lax as to be without parallel, we must suppose, in the annals of time or of eternity. It is impossible to conceive of a being capable of devising a law as wise and as holy as God's law, and who would still have so little regard to it, as to pay no attention to its violation by a whole world full of people who rush over it as recklessly as buffaloes over a prairie. It

would seem that if God were thus to ignore crime, he would become *particeps criminis*, and the universe would look on a dishonored God. Not so, however. God forgives sin, but it is not by a direct act, and a *mere* act, of forgiveness. It is by previous arrangement for the satisfaction of justice, and for the preservation of his own honor. It would certainly seem that *some* arrangement with these objects in view should be made, and if infinite wisdom has selected Christ as the lamb to be slain, and his death as a sufficient propitiation, nothing is left to us but to acquiesce, to bless God, and be saved.

There appears to us to be a necessity for an atonement for sin, unless the sinner is punished, from the fact that if sin were thus wholly ignored, all government would be at an end. If God were so careless of right, that fact would virtually be universal license. Laws without penalties, or which for any reason are not in *some* way enforced, are really no laws. Hence, but for the atonement, either sinners must have perished, or the universe would have been plunged into anarchy. But God has not thrown the reins of the universe aside; in other words, God has not ceased to be God. He has not abrogated law, he has not abolished moral distinctions; he forgives sinners, but he has not failed to assign its proper place to sin, nor to see that law is placed in the position of highest honor, even at the cost of identifying the Supreme Majesty of heaven with one of his creatures.

Certain it is, at any rate, that God, from the beginning, has pledged himself to the shedding of blood as the condition of the forgiveness of sin. The altar of Abel streamed with the blood of the firstlings of his flock, and God accepted his offering. It was by faith that the offering was made, faith we must suppose, in the blood of the promised Redeemer. Cain's offering was in itself quite as good, perhaps it was better; it may have been as costly; it would seem to unen-

lightened eyes to have been more appropriate ; and certainly it excels in the element of beauty. But there was no *blood* in it, and God rejected it. Faith in the blood that was to be shed in the fullness of time was not expressed by the fruits of the ground, and was not expressed, because it was not entertained ; and Cain's offering and himself were rejected. That he made any offering at all was an acknowledgment of God, but the absence of blood was a denial of his Son, without whose blood there is no remission. The rejection of this deistical worship, and the acceptance of the bloody offering which symbolized the precious blood of Christ, is God's first recorded testimony of the doctrine we preach, and this was given in connection with the first act of worship of which we have any knowledge. The practice was continued, with divine approbation, by the patriarchs. The Mosaic ritual was of divine appointment, and all its altars were reeking with blood. Why was this ? Why ran rivers of gore from the temple ? Why were whole herds of bleating lambs, all innocent and unsuspecting, slaughtered and laid, smoking and quivering, on Hebrew altars ? This was God's system of object-teaching. He impressed the minds of those rude people with the thought, that without shedding of blood there is no remission, by requiring them year after year, and century after century, to slaughter harmless animals as an act of worship. The destruction of these animals by thousands upon thousands, by the authority of the Most High, was his emphatic testimony, and his thorough committal of himself to the doctrine that the shedding of blood is an indispensable requisite to forgiveness with him. Jesus Christ taught the same lesson when he said : " This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins " ; and the blood-colored wine, which we drink in memory of our Lord, points back in symbol, as the blood of beasts once pointed forward, to the blood of the Lamb of



God that taketh away the sin of the world. It is no new doctrine. That Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world; that is, constructively slain; and what this means is, that the death of Christ was intended from the beginning as the means whereby justice and mercy could both be satisfied, in the salvation of God's elect. This is a part of the counsels of the divine mind before any act of creation; and is therefore part of the eternal law of God.

But might not some other method have been resorted to? We cannot measure the depth of the divine resources; but the fact that God has selected *this* method is proof that it is the best; and if the best, then the only one worthy of him; for nothing can proceed from him, or be adopted by him, which is inferior to the best. Hence we learn that it is impossible that God should forgive sin in any other way.

As already said, we cannot see how it is that the law is satisfied with the death of the innocent in place of the guilty, though prostrate before him, we accept his assurance of the fact. Still, we can see that in the death of Christ the law is honored beyond all powers of expression, beyond all powers of thought. The phenomena of the atonement must surely be the most astounding that eternity ever witnessed. The Almighty and Ever-living God himself, in person, unites himself with a member of a lost race. What an amazing fact! The individual thus exalted by him above every living being on earth or in heaven is despised by his fellows. Another amazement! He is buffeted, and spit upon, and crucified! No wonder that the earth trembled, and that the sun hid its face. The philosophy of this sublime, this awful transaction, is too deep for us; but this we can see: that the effect of this stupendous exhibition of God's respect for his law, and of his concern for sinners, must be infinite; and even the word *infinite*, though it means all that anything *can* mean, does not satisfy us; nothing can satisfy us; we have no capacity to

take in the thought. But we may surely feel safe in trusting to the plan which, by the crucifixion of the Son of God, is made sacred, and made holy, and elevated in dignity to the level of the eternal throne itself, whether we can fathom all the depths of its wonders or not.

It is a most noticeable fact, that the idea of the necessity of bloodshed to the propitiation of divine favor is not confined to those who possess the Sacred Scriptures, but, on the contrary, seems to have pervaded the whole mass of mankind. In all ages, and among all peoples, savage and civilized, we find the same prevalent idea. This universal sentiment must be the result of one of two things: It must either be the traditional record of a revelation made by the Almighty to the race ages ago, before men were divided and scattered; or it must be, that the human mind is so constituted by the Creator, that such a belief is intuitive, and a necessity of our intellectual life. Whether it is a revelation made *to* us, or a revelation made *in* us, is immaterial; in either case, it is a revelation from God, and a thing to be believed. Still, our best reliance is the more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed.

Admitting that bloodshed is necessary to the remission of sins, suppose that we make arrangements at once to slay certain animals, with a view to securing the favor of God. Many men, quite as intelligent as ourselves, some of them our own ancestors, have done this, and many are doing it now. Why should we not do it? Our minds are so enlightened that we see that there must be correspondence in the value of the blood that is shed, with the dignity of the law that has been violated. Hence we see that it is in vain to rely on the sacrifice of lambs. Others before us have seen and appreciated this insufficiency, and in order to make a better offering, they have sacrificed the lives of enemies captured in war. But as these were only enemies, there seemed still to be

a shortcoming; and to supply the lack of dignity and value, friends have been laid on the altar; and even yet there was a consciousness that something more, and something better was needed, and men and women have caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch; and yet human nature was not satisfied, (how much less the divine!) and men have tortured themselves with knives, and iron hooks, and scourges, and have finally sacrificed their own lives. So deep, so deep, is the yearning, so intense is the longing, of the human heart for a sacrifice of greater value than earth can supply; such is the groping of men in darkness, such is the feeling out of human nature, after an infinite Saviour. But we surely see that no sacrifice of finite things that can be made can meet the demands of an infinite law. Any such effort is like paying a debt of a certain number of dollars with an equal number of cents; except that in this case the shortcoming is only as one to a hundred, whereas in the case illustrated the shortcoming is infinite. So then let us abandon the idea of slaughtering animals, or of making any offering whatever, even of the whole earth itself, with all its riches, and all its people, if we had the power to do so. The blood of Jesus Christ was appointed in eternity as the necessary and sufficient ransom for our souls. On this let us rely. On this we do rely with joyous confidence, thanking God for his unspeakable gift.

If it be, as we have seen, that the eternal law of God requires blood as the condition precedent to the forgiveness of sin, those who refuse to avail themselves of the blood which God has provided synchronously with the law which calls for it, are committing soul suicide. Having disobeyed the law, they now disobey this higher law, this gospel; and thus while they enhance their guilt, they, at the same time, make pardon for themselves impossible.

There are those who profess a kind of faith in the atone-

ment wrought by Jesus Christ, but who postpone their full acceptance of it, on the ground that they are not good enough to be Christians, and who promise themselves that, after they have reformed, and amended their lives, they will give themselves wholly up to the salvation of the gospel. They are like a man covered with mire, and greatly needing to be washed, who stays away from a cleansing fountain, on the ground that he is too foul to use its waters. He stays away and becomes more foul; and thus the reason which he gives for not coming to the fountain becomes stronger every day, while at the same time, the reason why he ought to come becomes stronger every day.

There are some who imagine that they can cleanse themselves, without resort to the fountain. Their theory is that a life in future, of integrity, charity, and general morality, will have a solvent power, which will wash away the guilt of the past. If this be so, then the mission of Christ was unnecessary, his blood was shed in vain, and the condescension of the Almighty, in clothing himself with flesh, and dwelling among us, was an uncalled for thing, and a waste of dignity. These are they who, "going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Their mistake is fatal; their doom is certain. But however long they may have persisted in this blasphemous rejection of the grandest offer of eternity, we still say to them, even to *them*, in fidelity to our trust as preachers of this gospel, that the fountain is still flowing and ever-flowing, and that they are still invited to avail themselves of its cleansing power. Its touch will resolve into nothingness even such guilt as theirs. Let them but come to it, and they can sing as joyously as we :

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.

## SERMON VI.

### *JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.*

“A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”—  
ROMANS iii. 28.

THE law referred to is the most holy law of God, an epitome of which is found in the words: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. . . . And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The specific acts which are under the control of the great principles set forth in this brief statement of the law are innumerable; and, taken all together, they constitute the whole duty of man. Any man whose whole life from beginning to end has been passed in exact conformity to this law would be a perfect man, as perfect as any of the angels; he would receive no forgiveness, for he would have done nothing for which forgiveness would be needed; he would need no Saviour, for there would be nothing to be saved from. The beauty and the glory of the Lord would be upon him; and so long as he continued to lead such a life, whether in this world or in another to which he might be translated, he would enjoy the favor of God in its fullness.

But no man has kept this law. Every one of us has violated it times without number; or perhaps I might say that we have violated it but once, and that is all the time. Neither one of these forms of expression conveys the whole truth; it takes both of them together to do it. In countless ways we have violated the law by acts of disobedience; and, besides this, our whole nature is in a state of chronic oppo-

sition to it. Actively we break it; passively we rebel against it. It is not the law that is the accepted law of our life. Our wicked hearts repudiate it; and hence there is a mutual antagonism of the heart to the law, and of the law to the heart.

The penalties of the law must be as great in their fearfulness, as the law itself is in its grandeur. The latter must be the measure of the former. If the law is the highest expression of the *will* of God, its violation must call forth the highest expression of his *wrath*. What then is the condition of the human race? We can only say that those who have violated the law are obnoxious to its penalties; and to say this is to say that the race is the object of the everlasting displeasure of Almighty God; and to say this is to say that the race is doomed to destruction and ruin, awful, unutterable, inconceivable, and endless. Their death sentence is found in the words of Scripture, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

This is where the law leaves us. But the gospel, which is good news indeed, declares that, notwithstanding all this, a man may be justified; that he may be justified *without* the deeds of the law; that is, without obedience to law; in other words, that, notwithstanding the fact that he has broken that law, he may be regarded as if he had not broken it, and that innocence may be attributed to him, instead of guilt.

But all this is on condition. What is that condition? Surely if one had no personal concern in it, his curiosity would be roused to the highest pitch to inquire what condition that could be, which could lead to results so astounding. What can that be, which would forever suspend the operation of the eternal law of God? We should look for something greater than the great mountains, and deeper than the great deep, and vaster than all the worlds, aye, for something com-

mensurate with the Infinite. And, so far as relates to the foundation on which the wonderful phenomenon is based, our expectations are just. Its foundation is laid in infinite love. Its history, though it is from everlasting to everlasting, may be stated in very few words, and the words are these: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The foundation is the love of God; the procuring cause is his only begotten Son, who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person"; the condition is expressed in the words, "whosoever believeth." Here no reference is made to the law, nor to the deeds of the law; and the condition stands out in conspicuous solitude, "whosoever believeth." One might suppose that the "deeds of the law," though not mentioned, are implied. This morning's text mentions the deeds of the law, and mentions them only to exclude them. "A man is justified by faith *without* the deeds of the law." These have nothing to do with his justification; *that* is based on different grounds. Both the passages quoted have many parallels in the Sacred Scriptures. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" corresponds to the first text, in stating the condition singly, and with no allusion to acts of obedience to law. "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith," corresponds to the second in naming the condition, and also in naming the deeds of the law, in order to cast them out. These are but specimens of passages in the word of God, of which there are many, and no small number of them are in almost the same words; while in others the phraseology is greatly varied, though the doctrine taught is everywhere the same.

The doctrine of justification by faith, as it is technically called, is simply this: That on the single condition of faith, excluding all other conditions, a man, a sinful man, is re-

garded by Almighty God as a sinless man; and, so far as relates to his eternal interest, he will be so treated, from the moment he believes, and forevermore. After this, he may sin; and the Lord will chasten him for it, but he will not give him over unto death. (Ps. cxviii. 18.) On the contrary, his chastenings will sanctify him; and eventually God, who now *regards* him as innocent, will *make* him so, and he will really be sinless, and spotless, and pure, and holy, and in such spiritual condition, that he can, and will keep to the letter, and to the last iota, the glorious law—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself—with all the blessing, and all the exaltation which the keeping of that law implies.

The sinful acts are not justified, but he who commits them *is*; the sin is condemned, but the sinner is delivered; disobedience; after one is justified, brings penalties with it, but these are temporary; the great penalty is removed, and the sinful man, destined to become a sinless spirit, stands justified before God forever and ever. Faith is the condition; justification is the result; and the result of this is eternal life; for “whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Glorious ones we shall be made, who are justified by faith, even though we have *not* led lives of conformity to law. We shall never be saved by our obedience; for with our depraved nature obedience is impossible. If saved at all, it must be in some other way.

The foundation of that other way is as broad as the love of God; its condition is simply faith. Only this, and nothing more. The condition is the same for all, for the high and for the low, for the wise and for the simple, for those whom we call good, and for those whom we call bad; for there is no difference; “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The vilest sinner stands on the same plane with the most righteous among us. We are all on the same footing,



and the condition for one is the same as for another. Only believe. And is this all? This is all.

The doctrine seems to be a startling one: that a mere act of faith will change a man's condition from one of deepest guilt to one of adjudicated innocence; and that as the result of this, a lost soul becomes a saved one. But why should the doctrine surprise us? Certainly it is not because we have never heard it before. It has been the burden of the Christian ministry for eighteen hundred years. Some things are always new, and never lose their freshness. The old story is forever a new story, and we seize upon it with ever-increasing avidity. Simplicity itself, yet sublime, if it surprises us anew with every recurrence, it is as those who gaze on the eternal throne are filled with fresh amazement, as they take in more of its glory.

It is the doctrine of the gospel. I had almost said its *only* doctrine. Certainly it is its most conspicuous and its most distinguishing feature. Certainly if this doctrine were taken out of the New Testament, what would be left of it would afford us no ground of hope; the gospel element in it would wholly disappear. Our Saviour, eschewing argument, stated it, not encumbered with many words, but in syllables distinct as suns in the sky. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." He puts it positively—"He that believeth hath everlasting life." He puts it negatively—"He that believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Our brother Paul, inspired of God, in writing to the brethren at Rome, states the same doctrine with great length of argument; and in his letter to the Galatians, he almost seems to have had no object in view, other than to spread out the doctrine, and put it in various shapes, that all might comprehend.

The object of this faith is Jesus Christ. This glorious

personage combined two complete natures in one. He was entirely human, and also entirely divine. He was a man in every sense in which we are men, except that he was sinless. He was God; he was in the beginning with God, and he *was* God; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. He was sent by God the Father into this world; yet he came voluntarily. His mission here was to offer a sacrifice for sin which should be acceptable to God, and which would satisfy the demands of the law, of that holy law of love, compliance with which exhausts the possibilities of all created moral beings. As his powers are infinite, and as his mission has the sanction of the great Supreme, we may be sure that his errand has accomplished all that he proposed. Schemes laid by men often fail; but a scheme devised in eternity by Almighty God cannot fail. If it be true that heaven and earth may pass away, but that not one jot nor tittle of the law shall pass till all be fulfilled, so also it is equally true, that heaven and earth will pass away, and the throne of God will be overthrown, before one jot or tittle of Christ's work will fail of its accomplishment. The sacrifice that he offered was himself. He allowed himself to be put to death by crucifixion; and the blood that was shed on that occasion is the ground of our justification; for as the apostle says, we are "justified by his blood" (Rom. v. 9). When he hung on that cross, our sins in the divine contemplation hung on that same cross with him, for says the Scripture: "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Our guilt was constructively placed to his account, and he had it to answer for, and did answer for it; while on the other hand, amazing to relate, his righteousness which was perfect, was constructively placed to our credit, and we by the decree of God's grand Court of Equity, which supplies that wherein the law by reason of its universality is deficient, are entitled to its rewards. Stated in our

own words this seems too strange to be true; but here is exactly the same statement, in words which you will recognize as the words of inspiration: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) In other words again, we have simply exchanged places with Jesus Christ; the curse provoked by our violation of law falls on him, while the reward of absolute conformity to it is insured to us. This is justification; after this comes sanctification, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, and by which we are made not merely constructively holy, but actually so; and as the final result, comes eternal life.

The benefit of Christ's mission on earth does not accrue to all; it avails only for those who believe on him. It is proper here to repeat some words of our Saviour once already quoted: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Having now spoken of Christ as the object of faith, let us inquire into the *nature* of that faith. The word faith, as used in the Scriptures, means all that is meant by the word *belief*, as it is used in common conversation; but, besides this, it means more; how *much* more we shall presently inquire. For the present, I will merely say that a man must believe in the sense of accepting as true, all that is revealed concerning Jesus Christ, and all that was said by him. The facts concerning him must be admitted; the truths enunciated by him, or under his direction, must command the assent of the mind. But a cold intellectual assent is not all that it takes to constitute the faith of which the Scriptures speak. Besides this assent, which is but matter of opinion, there must be accompanying sentiment—the sentiment of acquiescence, of hearty acquiescence, of joyful acquiescence; so that one shall not only believe that these things are true,

but be *glad* that they are true; one's heart must ratify the decision of his judgment, so that when his intellect decides that these things are true, his moral nature, roused to enthusiasm, will shout "Amen!" Nor is this all. Belief of a proposition is one thing, and confidence in a person is another thing. It is one thing to believe a man, and another thing to believe *in* him; and one of these expressions means much more than the other. To believe a man is a specific mental act; to believe *in* him implies a chronic moral condition. The one is a cold intellection; the other is an intellection warmed up with feeling. It is like the confidence which a man has in his wife whom he loves, and whom he knows to be worthy of confidence, of confidence supreme. The colloquial English idiom exactly expresses it—*he believes in her*. Without reference to any particular thing, his knowledge of her character and his affection for herself are such that his confidence in her is generic and all-embracing. Here is my heart; there is Christ's; this heart trusts that one. The trust is universal, covering all the ground that trust *can* cover; it is unquestioning, it is implicit, and it is unshakable. Faith, then, is intellectual, giving rational assent; it is sentimental, rejoicing in assent; it "works by love," yielding a person to a Person, one person being myself, the other, Jesus Christ. *I believe in him*.

This faith which has been just described, when directed to Jesus Christ, whose person and work were briefly described a little while ago, is the ground of justification. Any sinner may stand on this ground. The moment he steps on it, he is a justified man. God looks on him as an innocent man; his sins are forgiven, and his life is hid with Christ in God. All sinners, great and small, are invited and encouraged and urged to exercise this trust. The most hardened sinner, the most atrocious, the most heaven-daring and God-defying, has but to exercise this trust, and all is done that needs to be

done. *Eo instanti*—that very moment, judgment in his favor goes to the record in the Book of Life. Jesus Christ makes no exceptions, and no one else has the right to make any, and I will make none. “Whosoever believeth.” I shall not amend the record by striking out the word *whosoever*, and inserting another of smaller scope. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life”; not *shall* have, but *hath*. It is a thing of the present moment. People imagine that salvation consists in going to heaven; salvation begins the moment we are justified; and we are justified the moment we believe. It is not proper to say that the saints will be saved; the saints are already saved.

Look now for a moment at the law. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; . . . and . . . thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Do this and live. Turn we now to the gospel. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Do this and live. Which of these two things is it easier to do? The first is impossible. So there is only one thing that we can do. The choice is not between this and something else; the choice is between this and nothing. Now if a man *cannot* do the one, and *will* not do the other, he does neither; he violates both law and gospel. He does not obey; he will not accept the obedience of another which God offers to regard as if it were his own. No wonder the Apostle Peter exclaimed: “What shall the end be of them that obey not the *gospel* of God?” 1 Peter iv. 17. Having disregarded his law, they now spurn his invitations; needing forgiveness, they refuse to accept it. What *ought* their end to be?

Various objections are raised to the doctrine of justification by faith, as indeed to all other doctrines that are true. Whether or not I can answer these objections is immaterial; for the thing that has been said is true, whether the ob-

jections to it are answered or not. But some of these may be for a moment noticed.

It may be said that the doctrine tends to licentiousness; for if a man is taught that he may be saved without the deeds of the law, he will not practice them; he will live as he lists, and comfort himself with the hope of pardon on the ground that he believes on Jesus. I have to reply, that a world-wide experience teaches just the reverse of this. The believers in Jesus Christ are the very best men we have. The world has never produced their peers. In reverence for God, in obedience to his law, in consecration to his service, in deeds of self-sacrificing benevolence, they are so far superior to any other class of men, that no comparison can be instituted. If those who raise this objection are willing to judge of a tree by its fruits, let them place those who do not accept the doctrine, beside those who do; and one glance at that spectacle will answer their objection.

Another objection to the doctrine may be that it excludes all manner of good works; it excludes repentance; it excludes hatred of sin; it excludes the love of God; it excludes prayer; in short, it excludes everything in which there is any merit; and a doctrine which excludes everything that is good, must be false. It is true that the doctrine does exclude all these things; but what does it exclude them from? It excludes them from being the ground of our justification. Ought they not to be excluded? Has any one of them any justifying power? Have we discharged any duty in such perfection that it can be urged as a reason for our justification? Are we capable of any such perfection in duty? The more thoroughly our works are excluded, the better. If any one of them were admitted, our hopes would all be spoiled. When we stand before our righteous Judge, let us be glad that our record does not appear. Duty is taught in the law; but this gospel is to teach how our shortcomings in regard to

that law may be remedied. There is no remedy in anything that we can *do*. The only remedy is in what Christ *has* done.

Still another objection to the doctrine of justification by faith is, that it makes the law void, and of none effect; that is, that if God justifies men without reference to their obedience to his law, it shows that he has no respect for his law, and that he allows it to be violated with impunity. Our brother Paul replies to this objection, by saying that, so far from making the law void, we establish it. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law." (Rom. iii. 31.) If God were to justify us on the ground of such obedience as *we* can render, *that* would be making the law void indeed; for it would be accepting as satisfactory that which is known to be worthless. But in justification by faith in the Son of God, the law is honored, for its holiness is acknowledged. That law requires perfection, and can be satisfied with nothing less. God recognizes our absolute inability to render such service, and permits us to offer in place thereof the righteousness of Christ, which is all that the law demands. With joy accepting this amazing offer, we sing:

I have no refuge of my own,  
But fly to what my Lord hath done,  
And suffered once for me.

Slain in the guilty sinner's stead,  
His spotless righteousness I plead,  
And his availing blood.  
That righteousness my robe shall be,  
That merit shall atone for me,  
And bring me near to God.

Who does the most honor to the law; the man who offers to satisfy it with his own works, wretched as they are, thus bringing *it* to a level with them? or the man who, confessing

his infinite failure, hides behind the righteousness of Christ, exclaiming :

Rock of Ages ! cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee !  
Should my tears forever flow,  
Should my zeal no languor know,  
All for sin could not atone ;  
Thou must save, and thou alone.

A few remarks of a general nature will close the discussion of this subject.

1. There are those who seem to be devout people who, nevertheless, strange as it may seem, oppose this doctrine. It is to be observed that their opposition is found in their preaching, in their conversation, and in their writings, but never in their prayers. Their hearts are more orthodox than their heads. The experience of all Christian hearts is the same. When men stand up erect, with their heads aloft, they indulge in man-made theories ; but when they come to their knees, and bow down before God, they cry with one voice : "Unclean ! unclean, all over ! Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake !"

It is remarkable too, that very little of their doctrine appears in their hymns. It is not in accord with the genius of song. The spirit of poetry abhors it. It is refractory under the laws of rhythm. It cannot be set to music, and consequently cannot be sung. It is as discordant with the melody of the ear as it is with that of the heart. It destroys the harmony of sweet sounds. A hymn that would contradict the doctrine of "Rock of Ages, cleft for me !" or "Jesus, lover of my soul !" or "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord !" and other immortal lyrics of like character, would be doomed to early death, and deserved death. A doctrine which cannot be prayed, and cannot be sung, but can only be talked about, is not worth talking about. It fails



in two-thirds of the branches of Christian worship, and is good for nothing in the other third. But when we sing—

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,

every Christian heart leaps up, and throbs a deep "Amen!"

2. The doctrine of justification by faith is peculiarly disagreeable to human nature. One would suppose that men would seize with eagerness on a doctrine which is so satisfying and which makes peace with God so easy of attainment! But such is the perversity of depraved hearts that they turn away from safety. The doctrine is subversive of human pride, and excludes all shadow of boasting. The human heart clings to its own works. This doctrine shows that, if a man is saved at all, he is saved *without* works, and this is the very last point that the unregenerate heart will ever give up; indeed, even some of God's elect seem, in their conversation, but never in their prayers, to cling to it.

There may be some here who are convicted of sin, and who now experience great spiritual distress. It may be that their difficulty lies right here. They are not ready to acknowledge themselves totally helpless, and utterly unable to do anything for themselves. They cannot say from their very hearts:

Other refuge have I none ;  
Hangs my helpless soul on thee !

They anxiously inquire, "What must I *do*? What must I *do*?" There is nothing to be done. That which had to be *done* was done eighteen hundred years ago, and nothing more is needed. I will repeat some words, and if you can adopt them as the language of your heart, you may feel safe; and these are the words: "Lord, if I am saved it will be of thy grace, through what Christ has done for me, and not for what I have done for myself; my salvation is not because I

have repented, and wept, and prayed, and forsaken my sin, but because Christ died. On him, O my God, I rely, on him I rely with confidence and with joy; and I thank thee for thy unspeakable gift."

Is this the real sentiment of your soul? Then I congratulate you, my brother, and I have no hesitation in assuring you that, sinful man as you are, you stand justified before God. Think you not that this is the sentiment of the saints in heaven? Then why should it not be theirs on earth? Oh! if ever you should be taken to that happy place, you will not say that your poor works have brought you there. No! you will not introduce such discord into the anthems of the blest. You will not so falsify the consciousness of your own soul. You will repudiate yourself and exalt your Saviour. You will not look *down* to the wretched doings of earth, but will look *up* to the great mountain of God's holiness, and to the head-stone thereof, and will unite with the blood-washed throng, in shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it."

3. The doctrine of justification by faith is peculiar to the gospel of Christ, and distinguishes it from every other system of religion. No man ever would or could have thought of such a thing. It came from heaven, and to heaven, its native place, it will conduct us.

4. Those who oppose this doctrine are in bad company. Popery is a system of works, and so is Judaism, and Mohammedanism, and Deism, and all the forms of Paganism; and at the last day those who, with brazen face and confident tone, put forward their works, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" thus reciting the catalogue of their good deeds, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." Oh! in that day may we be of those who, surprised at the mention of anything good in them, will tremblingly inquire: "Lord, *when* saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" thus repudi-

ating self; for these are they whom God calls "the righteous"; and these shall go into "life eternal."

5. The doctrine of justification by faith is a *safe* doctrine. If it be an error, it is not a fatal error. For if we are to be saved by works, the good deeds of those who believe this doctrine will be as acceptable in heaven as those of its opponents. But a doctrine opposite to this is *not* safe. If it be wrong, it is fatally so. If it be wrong, its advocates cannot be saved by works; and having repudiated justification by faith, they cannot be saved by that; and hence cannot be saved at all. To us who believe in justification by faith there is the same opportunity for salvation by works that there is for others; but should that fail, as we know it will, then we can fall back, as we do, on the Rock of Ages.

Let all saints, therefore, rely with joyous confidence on the blood of the atonement; for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

To all sinful men who are trying to make themselves better, in order that they may become Christians, and who are trying to satisfy their consciences by a pure and godly life, my counsel is this: *Don't try any more!* Abandon the hopeless enterprise. Admit that you are ruined, and that you are helpless. Admit that it is impossible for you ever to be justified in the sight of God, or even in your own, on the ground of your conformity to God's holy law. Surely this is easy to admit. Let your faith seize with a death-grip on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of men! Lay hold, and lay hold for life, on the promise: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Wait not to fit yourself to come to him, for you will never be fit, and—

All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him.

Come to Jesus; come saying in your heart:

Just as I am, without one plea,  
 But that thy blood was shed for me,  
 And that thou bid'st me come to thee,  
     O Lamb of God ! I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not  
 To cleanse my soul of one dark blot,  
 To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
     O Lamb of God ! I come.

Come *now* ! Trust in Christ *now*. And I say to you fearlessly, knowing that what I say will be put on my record, and that I must face that record at the last day, I say to you boldly :

“BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED.”

\* \* \* The following Scriptures confirm the doctrine of the discourse.

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—John iii. 16.

He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.—John iii. 18.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.—John iii. 36.

This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.—John vi. 40.

I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.—John xi. 25.

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name.—John xx. 31.

By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.—Acts xiii. 39.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.—Acts xvi. 31.

By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.—Rom. iii. 20.

The righteousness of God *which* is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference : for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.—Rom. iii. 22, 23.

For the promise . . . was not to Abraham through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.—Rom. iv. 13.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.—Rom. v. 1.

Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.—Rom. ix. 31, 32.

A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; . . . for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.—Gal. ii. 16.

As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident ; for the just shall live by faith.—Gal. iii. 10, 11.

By grace are ye saved through faith, . . . not of works, lest any man should boast.—Eph. ii. 8.

All these passages, and many others that might be quoted, teach the same doctrine that is taught by the text of the preceding discourse : “A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”—Rom. iii. 28.

## SERMON VII.

### THE MOTIVE POWER.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.”—2 CORINTHIANS v. 14.

THE reference here may be either to the love which Christ bears to his people, or to the love which they bear to him. Without venturing to decide this point, I shall assume that the love which is spoken of is that which burns in the bosoms of the saints towards their Saviour and their God. The sentiment of the text, as thus interpreted, is not only true, but Scriptural; and whether these words were used on this occasion by the apostle, with the intention of expressing this sentiment or not, it is certain that they do express it, and I feel at liberty so to construe them; and I feel the more free to do this, because, in my own opinion, this is the *proper* construction.

It has often been declared that the discharge of duty is not the ground of our justification; and that any attempt to set ourselves right before God by a life of piety, is in vain. The most holy life that we could lead would come short of what is required, and that is all that could be said of the most wicked life that is possible. The good and the bad among us stand on the same footing, as to the point in question, and if any are justified, it must be on some principle which is equally applicable to all. Any man, without reference to his past life, and no matter how wicked it may have been, who will exercise faith in Jesus Christ, will be justified by Almighty God; and if justified, then saved and glorified. But if one is not justified by good works, neither is he saved

by them. The justification and salvation of men are wholly apart from their deeds, whether good or bad. Faith is all. Nothing more is needed; nothing else will suffice. This is the doctrine everywhere taught in the Scriptures. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." With faith you are safe; without it you are lost.

Notwithstanding all this, the law which requires obedience is not suspended. It is as much our duty to do and to be all that the law requires, as if our salvation depended on this discharge of duty. It is our duty to repent of sin, and so to repent as to abandon it; it is our duty to love God supremely, and also to love our neighbor as ourselves. To glorify God, in all that we do or say or think or feel or are, is enjoined on every one of us. To do good to all; and if need be, to suffer for others; and if necessity requires, even to die for others,—is duty.

But if justification and salvation are wholly of grace, and wholly irrespective of duty, where is the incentive to righteous living? Of what use is it to lead a life of obedience, if grace saves us through faith, *without* obedience? And is it not a waste of breath to urge men to duty when all *motive* to duty is taken away? Is not the doctrine of justification by faith a stumbling-block? For, although it be accompanied by exhortations to a godly and benevolent and consecrated life, of what avail are the exhortations when no incentives and no inducements are offered? Men never act without motive; this doctrine takes away the motive, and yet expects men to act!

In reply to all this, I have to say that whatever the seeming may be, facts show that *all* motive is *not* taken away; nay, that some of the most powerful motives that can possibly affect a moral being are left. We find a most notable ex-

ample in the case of our brother Paul. The doctrine of justification by faith is the burden of all his discourses ; he seems to have considered it his special mission to promulgate it. Yet his life was full of good works ; no man's was ever more so. In labors he was abundant ; in stripes above measure ; in prisons frequent ; in deaths oft ; of the Jews five times received he forty stripes save one. In journeyings often ; in perils of waters ; in perils of robbers ; in perils by his own countrymen ; in perils by the heathen ; in perils in the city ; in perils in the wilderness ; in perils in the sea ; in perils among false brethren ; in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings often ; in hunger and thirst ; in fastings often ; in cold and nakedness. And besides those things that were without, he had the care of all the churches. And yet when he speaks of all this he says : "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses." Now it is true that men never act without motive ; yet Paul, the great preacher of the doctrine of justification by faith, did all this, and he did it cheerfully, and therefore there must have been a motive ; and not only so, but a motive of prodigious power—a motive which was more than a match for all the tremendous forces which he had to combat. So those who think that his doctrine takes away all incentive to action must be mistaken. Judging by his life, one would infer that he had discovered some new motive, holding in spiritual dynamics a position similar to that of dynamite or electricity in physical forces. Up to his day, no man had ever led such a life, of such magnificent energy, and of such sublime self-sacrifice ; and up to his day, no man had ever declared the doctrine of justification by faith with such clearness and force and cogency and persistency and enthusiasm. He is the embodiment of two extremes. He is the extreme advocate of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, and at the same time the most extreme example of con-



secrated life known to the Sacred Scriptures. The inference would seem to be that the more devoted a man is to the doctrine, the more abundant he will be in good works. It may be said that this is an isolated case. Thousands of cases, not so striking, it is true, but of the same general character, might be adduced. Our missionaries to the heathen go to the other side of the world for the express purpose of preaching this very doctrine, and they are the very men who make more sacrifice than anybody else. Even among ourselves, the most ardent *believers* are the most zealous *workers*; so much so that it has come to be a proverb, that he who abounds in works is strong in the faith; and the sentiment is just as common, that a man who has no works to show, has no right to speak of his faith; either one is always taken as the measure of the other.

We have spent time enough in showing that the doctrine of justification by faith does not deprive men of motive; and in doing this we have seen that it seems to supply some new motive, unknown to men before, and stronger than any other of which we have any knowledge. It is time to inquire what is that motive? The text, with the construction that I have put on it, answers this question. "The love of Christ constraineth us." It is a new motive. Without the knowledge of Christ, the love of him could not exist; and until he was revealed, there was no such motive on earth. Nothing can develop its power but himself. If the force be in human nature, it is latent, and is as though it were not; but the moment that the soul lays hold by faith on Jesus Christ, that moment the dormant energy is roused and springs into action, and thenceforth becomes the ruling motive of life. From nothingness it leaps into supremacy. The world never saw its like until Christ came. An evidence of his divine nature it is, that he has aroused a moral force which all other forces combined cannot resist. True, the law places us

under supreme obligations to love; but while the law commands love, it is the gospel of Christ that inspires it.

If Christ has died to redeem us, and if we can stand justified before the holy God by his merits and his blood, simply by faith in him, surely our obligations to him are supremely great, transcending immeasurably all other obligations of which we can conceive. The motive which prompts us to meet these obligations ought to be the strongest and the noblest. Nothing less than this would be either adequate or appropriate.

One of the great motives of life is the hope of reward. We all feel its force, and on certain occasions it is a proper motive. But it is not always so. When one has done me some great favor, a favor so great that no language can express it, shall I afterwards render him a service only because I expect him to reward me for it? I am already rewarded, rewarded in advance, ten thousand times over, for all that I can possibly do. Suppose he has saved me from an overwhelming grief; and suppose he has done this by taking the grief and the agony on himself; shall I afterwards discharge a duty to him only because I expect him to *pay* me for it? We shudder away from the thought with horror and disgust. Christ has saved us from the pains of hell, from the terrors of the law, from the wrath of God; and he did it by sacrificing himself; he took our load on him, and bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Shall we obey his law, which we were under supreme obligations to obey before he came or died, simply because we hope to be rewarded for the discharge of this duty? No, no! In his service there is nothing mercenary. His saints lose sight of self, and see naught but him. For Christ's sake, not for my own, let me serve him. For his pleasure, for his glory, let me do and be and suffer whatever may be required of me. Men sometimes serve each other for pay, as it is right

sometimes that they should; but at other times they are actuated by motives at once stronger and nobler. Base as human nature is, men will do less for pay than they will for love. For the love of country a man will face a storm of bullets and the cannon's mouth, belching fire and iron, when all the gold in the whole world would not induce him to stand in that place for one moment. A man will rescue his brother from a tiger's jaws for love, but not for pay. The mother does not nurse her babe for pay. At the expense of exquisite pain to herself, she will give nourishment to the little one, because she loves it; but she could not be hired to do it. Nor does she do it because she hopes for reward in the future career of her offspring. Not so; she would do the same thing if she knew that the babe would die the next day. There is a stronger force in the human heart than the hope of *anything*, on earth or in heaven. After all, self is not the god of this world. Depraved as we are, the unselfish motives are the strongest. Surely they are the purest and the noblest; and least like the things of earth, and most like the things of heaven. Surely the Lord of Glory, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, who took on him the form of man, and assumed our whole nature that Jesus the Christ might suffer in our stead and redeem us from the curse of the law, ought to be served from the highest motives of which we are capable. The hope of reward is not one of these. Shall we obey the law merely with an eye to the profit that is to be made? Never, never! Let our souls rise above the groveling impulse, higher than eagle ever flew, higher than the atmosphere of earth reaches, and leaving it out of sight and breathing the air of the heavenly hills, let us exclaim: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Another great motive of human conduct is fear—the fear of punishment, or of penalty, or of some kind of injury. It is sometimes a proper motive. When exercised on suitable

occasions, there is nothing in it dishonorable or unmanly. The man who when exposed to great danger is not afraid, is simply a fool. The man who does not avoid danger, when he can do so with propriety, is regarded as of unsound mind; and we observe that all men do use precaution to shelter themselves from harm. But it is very far from being one of the strongest motives; I may almost say that it is one of the weakest. It will not restrain a burglar from risking his life for the sake of opening an iron chest, in which there may be nothing of value. It will not restrain even the curiosity of a traveler, who wishes to look into the crater of a volcano. When it comes to measure strength with benevolence, which is but a form of love, its power disappears entirely. More than once has a brave, lion-hearted fireman rushed through the flames of a blazing building, whose floors were sinking under his weight, and amid falling timbers, to rescue a child in its cradle—and, the child not his! And as with his clothes falling from him in burning flakes, and as with grimy and scorched face, and bleeding hands, he delivered his prize to its mother, the shouts of the multitude rent the very heavens—the tribute of a thousand hearts to the love which conquered fear and fire! Here again we see that the selfish passions are as nothing when the *unselfish* summon up their powers. Fear is selfish; but love annihilates it. Well did the Apostle John say: “Perfect love casteth out fear.” The Christ of God ought to be served from our strongest motives; but fear is not one of them; on the contrary, it is so feeble a motive that it stands in the way of no strong desire.

I have said that fear is an honorable motive; and so at times it is; but at other times, it is disgraceful. The man who allows his fears to prevent his discharge of duty, is a coward—a coward, that despicable *thing* which more than any other excites the contempt of all high-minded men—and women—and children. When we see a man do a thing from

fear, which ought to be done from a nobler motive, we are ashamed that he is one of our species.

Suppose a man has rendered me a great service, of more value to me than life itself, or than a thousand lives, if such a thing were possible, and afterwards he desires a small service from me. I refuse to do it, until he threatens me ; and then fearing that the weight of his hand may fall on my worthless person, I sneak away like a poltroon and do it! Is it possible to describe in human language anything so ignominious!

“It is Christ that died ; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” With Gethsemane and Calvary before our eyes, and knowing that the very same hands that were nailed to the cross are stretched out in intercession for us, shall we keep his law (which it was our duty to obey even if he had not died) from no higher motive than fear? . Our obligations to God are supreme, without reference to Christ ; we are subject to his law, inexorable and holy ; and now since Christ has died to redeem us from its curse, our obligations are increased and intensified tenfold, ten thousand fold. Shall we meet these obligations, which ought to be met from the purest and most exalted impulses of our nature, only like trembling slaves, from fear of the lash? Those who would be whipped into the service can never be in the service. If a man has no heart for the work, his work is worthless. But if the love of Christ constraineth him, then he renders the noblest tribute in his power ; then he has exhausted his resources. Would anything less than this be sufficient? Human excellence and human kindness excite our love. Shall Christ, who is the embodiment of infinite excellence, and of kindness surpassing our conceptions, be put off with that which is inferior to what we afford to each other? No. Let us not serve him from motives which are but second-best. Anything less than

the very best is but an insult to Infinite Loveliness, and Infinite Majesty.

But are not both fear and hope appealed to in the Sacred Scriptures? Yes: fear, that we may be warned to flee from the wrath to come; hope, that we may be led to accept the great salvation. But when one has embraced Christ, and taken him into his heart, and especially if he "can read his title clear to mansions in the skies," fear and hope cease to be the conscious motive of his actions. A stronger and superseding power comes in, and so overrides them that they drop out of notice. These motives would control him, if there were not a better; but when one is conscious that these are operative in any controlling sense, it is a sign that his love is failing. If these are helpers of the greater power, it is as the inappreciable strength of a man's arm helping the piston-stroke of a huge engine. Hope as an enjoyment, and fear as a filial affection are for the saints; but hope and fear as springs of action are for the unconverted. The stars hold their places in the heavens to keep the universe in balance, and they shine by day as well as by night; but when the sun rises, their illuminating power is lost. Hope and fear hold their places, but they are in abeyance; the stronger power, the more glorious power, absorbs their functions.

The doctrine of justification by faith is objected to, on the ground that it deprives us of motive for holy living and for good works. A blessed thing it is that the objection is raised; for its discussion enables us to show that it does indeed leave us without such motives as are selfish, and unworthy of occasion so grand and so glorious; it spurns away the greed of the hireling and the meanness of the coward; it rises above all motives but the best; it singles out one—one to which the whole universe pays homage; one whose purity is angelic, Godlike; whose dignity is peerless; whose power transcends all other powers combined; and *this* one it claims for its own.

It is the only doctrine that makes such a claim; it is but just that the grandest of doctrines should make the grandest of claims. The objection to the doctrine instead of overthrowing it, only brings out its sublimity, and establishes its truth. Christ should have the best, and nothing *but* the best; this doctrine claims it for him, and concedes it to him; the opposite doctrine either deprives him of the best; or if not, it mingles baser motives with the best, and this taints and poisons the whole. It is the only doctrine that renders Christ his due, and therefore the only one that is true; and the doctrine of the objector to this would incite us to the service of our Lord from motives unworthy of *him* or of *us*; and being thus tied to low motives it is dragged to the depths itself, and lies low with other errors. There let it lie. It makes slaves of Christ's lovers, and hirelings of his worshipers.

The great difference between a man who is regenerate and one who is not, is in the motive of their actions. Two men may be in action exactly alike; and yet one may be accepted of God, and the other not. Why is it when the two lives are precisely the same, virtue for virtue, measure for measure, that one should be beloved of the Lord and welcomed to everlasting joy, while the other is abhorred and doomed to endless death? There is nothing strange in it; it is just as it should be. The motives may be radically different; and while human judgment begins with the overt act, and argues back to the motive, God reverses the process, and beginning with the motive traces it through the outward act; and if the motive be bad, it vitiates all that flows from it. A clean thing cannot come out of an unclean.

One man does what is right, in order that he may be saved; the other does what is right, because he *is* saved. There is a world-wide difference between the two, even though outwardly one is the exact counterpart of the other.

One is trying to purchase his way into the pearly gates, as if by such wretched doings as he is capable of, he could bring his Maker in debt to him, and thus enter into the heavenly city as matter of right. And what makes the matter worse is that, in offering his own righteousness, which is imperfect, he is rejecting that of Jesus Christ, which is perfect and which God has promised to accept; and what is more, instead of going in the way that God has marked out for him, he marks out a course for himself, preferring his judgment to that of infinite wisdom; and all this is done, not from love to God, and not to glorify God, but from love of self and to glorify self; and above all he is an unbeliever; he has no faith in Jesus Christ; and "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The other man begins by repudiating all that the man just described regards as valuable. He has no price to offer for an admission ticket; his righteousness he knows to be but rags, and filthy rags; he would not offer it to the Almighty; he knows that he is eternally bankrupt, and that he can neither pay, nor do anything that is of value; he knows that if he is ever justified, it will not be by virtue of anything that there is in him; he knows that he has violated God's most holy law, and that it is a part of his nature to keep on violating it; and that he never can extricate himself from this depraved and lost condition; and he has nothing to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon him. Nothing—that is nothing springing from self, or from earth. But he has a reason, and a good one, a reason that God himself has supplied him with. The reason is this: "'It is Christ that died,' and I trust in him; I accept him as my Saviour, and him only; I have no hope except in him; I reject any salvation which does not come through him; and I know that trust in him insures eternal life."



That man is justified before God ; and being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom he has now received the atonement, with all its benefits and blessings.

Now he dedicates his life to God, not that he *may be* saved ; for his salvation has come already, and in another way. Now the noblest motive that ever stirred the depths of a human soul springs into life. The love of Christ constrains him ; and henceforth this is the ruling principle of his life.

See then the difference between two men, who are outwardly exactly alike. See, too, the justice which receives one to eternal life, and consigns the other to eternal death. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

It is common, too, for those who are trying to be good, in order that they may be saved, to ask whether this thing or that thing is essential to salvation ; for if they can ascertain that it is not essential, they will give themselves no concern about it, and will neglect it, no matter how pleasing it may be to the God that made them, and to the Saviour that died for them. It is a common thing for them to say : " If the matter is not essential, what is the use of even thinking about it ? " The love of God is not in them ; for if it were, the question would be, not " What *must* I do ? " but " What *may* I do ? " Their inquiry is : " How little can I do, and yet be saved," as if they would drive a close bargain with their Maker, and purchase his favor at the lowest possible price, reserving for themselves as much as they can, to consume it on their lusts.

The man who can say with hearty emphasis and with strong enthusiasm : " The love of Christ constraineth me," is lifted infinitely above the plane of him who asks : " How

little can I do and yet be saved?" and, breathing the pure air of lofty heights, his earnest inquiry is: "How much can I do, because I am saved, in honor of him who has saved me?" He has no words to throw away about essentials and non-essentials, for between these things there is no difference with him; and if there were, he would not stop to examine it; his heart is filled with glowing love, and his eager inquiry is, "What can I do to please my Saviour? What can I do to glorify my God?"

This is the spirit that marks the Christian. The love of Christ constrains him. This motive is akin to that which prompted the sending of Christ into the world. Love sent him; love serves him. The fire is caught from heaven, and kindles a kindred flame in human hearts. God loves his Son; and we love his Son; and his affections and ours, meeting in a common centre, bring us close together in life, and will take us to his very bosom in death. The heavenly hosts serve God from love. With them there are no rewards, nor punishments, nor hopes, nor fears. There is but one law in heaven, and that is the law of love. And in the kingdom of heaven on earth of which the saints are subjects, and whose salvation is as secure as that of those enthroned in glory, the same law pervades every soul, and with one acclaim they love to say:

"THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US."

\*.\* When this sermon was delivered, the preacher thought it best not to raise difficulties which would not be likely to occur to the minds of his hearers; but now that it goes to the record, it is thought proper to append the following remarks:

There is an ambiguity in our use of the word *fear* which sometimes leads to confusion of thought, though in general, the sense is well understood. Fear sometimes means that which is to be despised,

and sometimes that which is to be honored ; and the subject matter spoken of generally indicates the sense in which the word is to be understood. "The fear of the Lord" is often spoken of as embodying the whole of Christian duty ; yet no one supposes that Adam was in a gracious state when he said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was *afraid*." The "fear of the Lord" which is commended is reverence and awe, mingled with love ; the fear of the wicked, such as Adam experienced, and such as will prompt them in the last day to call on the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, is terror and dismay unmixed with love. It is to be regretted that the same word is used to designate things so wholly unlike, so wholly at opposites. The prophet declares that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. ix. 10.) Yet one apostle says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." (Rom. viii. 15.) Again, the Apostle Peter says, "He that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts x. 35.) Yet the Apostle John says, "There is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear ; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (1 John iv. 18.) In words, there is a palpable contradiction in these various passages ; in meaning there is none, for two different things are spoken of, though the same *name* is applied to both. We are commanded to "Fear God and keep his commandments : for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. xii. 13), yet our Lord teaches, that to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves, is the whole duty of man. Evidently the words *fear* and *love* are used in these passages as if they were synonymous. In our speech, the imperfection of language embarrasses us, but there is no conflict of facts ; filial fear, which is only another name for profound and loving reverence, is duty ; the fear of the wicked, which is only another name for unfilial dread, is part of the "torment" due to their guilt. It is needless to say that, in the denunciations of the preceding discourse, reference is had to the fear which might perhaps be described by the word *afraidness*, if there were such a word, and not to that devout and heart-felt homage, which is the "beginning," or as a different and perhaps better rendering would give it, the *principal part*, "of wisdom." Nothing more needs to be said in explanation of the preceding sermon ; but it may not be amiss to add, that the word *fear* is used to describe what is merely matter of prudence, as when one will not expose himself to unnecessary danger ; and also to describe an emotional instinct, which is common to men and the lower animals ; and also to describe mere solicitude, perhaps for another, as when one says, "I fear you are not well to-

day"; and also to describe sheer cowardice, as when one is unwilling to take risks that he ought to take. It is unfortunate that one word has to do duty in so many different ways; and certainly our language would be greatly enriched, and our thinking would often be much more clear, if we had a different name for each of the things, so different from each other, which are above referred to.

We are also troubled somewhat with the ambiguity of the word *hope*. As the word is ordinarily used, it implies a combination of expectation, desire, and doubt. That which is known is not hoped for; "for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" What is called hope in Christian experience, when directed toward God, is expectation and desire, *without* doubt. When the Psalmist says, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God!" he adds, with undoubting and joyous assurance, "For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." (Ps. xlii. 5.) But when the hope of the saint is directed towards himself, the element of doubt enters; not because he doubts God, but because he doubts the genuineness of his own faith. He hopes for heaven with doubt; not because he doubts its reality, nor because he doubts God's determination to save his elect; but because he doubts his own heart. He hopes for answer to prayer, not because he thinks that God is slack concerning his promises, but because he knows that his own faith is weak. He has "respect to the recompense of the reward," hoping for an entrance into the kingdom and enjoying its anticipations, knowing that even the gift of a cup of cold water will not be forgotten; but does he ever give such a cup because he expects to get his pay? Are there no Samaritans to help the wounded wayfarer without hope of reward? Is there nothing unselfish? And if any is to be served from unselfish motives, should not Christ be so served? The song of praise will be rewarded; but is that the reason why it is sung? Is it not rather the outgush of the soul towards God? A heroic missionary takes the gospel to cannibals, or some other great sacrifice is made; is this on the ground of so much for so much? The reward of Christian life is hoped for, but it is Christ that is worked for, and lived for, and, if need be, died for. Hope and fear may incite, but it is the love of Christ that *constrains*. Until this takes possession of the heart, no acceptable work is done; when this enters into the service, it absorbs all other motives into itself.

## SERMON VIII.

### *THE TEST OF LOVE.*

“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.”—JOHN xiv. 15.

IN King James' Version of the New Testament the text reads: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” The rendering of the Revised Version, which is adopted in this discourse, reads thus: “If ye love me, ye *will* keep my commandments.” In the Old Version the text contains a precept: “Keep my commandments”; in the New Version it contains no precept, but rather a prophecy, or at least, a statement of fact: “Ye will keep my commandments.” The text as thus rendered is equivalent to two distinct propositions, one expressed, and one implied: First. All who love me keep my commandments. Second. None who fail to keep my commandments do love me. The text simply draws the line of demarkation between those who love Christ and those who do not love him. The doers are the lovers; the non-doers are the non-lovers. Many passages of Scripture, some of which will be hereafter quoted, teach the same doctrine; but the passage before us has been selected as the foundation of this discourse, because it expresses the thought in fewer words than any other, and seems to have a sharpness and point not elsewhere to be found.

The Scriptures teach that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”; the result of which is, that a man is saved with an everlasting salvation without the slightest reference to anything that he has ever done or can ever do. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only ground of salva-

tion. Yet obedience to the law is as much a duty as if Christ had never died; nay more, for since more has been done for us, we are under additional obligation; and what was duty before is doubly duty now; and besides this, we have an additional incentive to duty, for the love of Christ constraineth us, and if we are now disobedient, we resist stronger impulses for good than would have been possible if Christ had not come, and hence incur a greater guilt. If God in his mercy has provided a plan whereby some of the violators of his law may be forgiven, it does not follow that his law is thereby abrogated, repealed, or suspended. The great principles of right and wrong can never be suspended; and this is only another form of saying that the law of God is eternal and unchangeable. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," has always been the law of God for moral and rational beings, and that law will abide forever. It is the will of God, and has its origin in the nature of God, and therefore must be as immutable and as eternal as he is. During the existence of God, not for one moment can that law cease to operate; for when that ceases he ceases.

Through the merciful arrangement which God has made for us in the plan of salvation, we are removed from under the curse which our violation of that law has brought upon us; but the law itself is just what it always was. Christ, the great disturbing cause, has removed us from under its curse, but not from under its obligation. "Think not," says he, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 17, 18. His mission was not to diminish our obligations, but to increase them; and wherein we fail, his function is

to supply what is lacking, substituting his perfect righteousness for ours which is imperfect, so that every jot and tittle of the law may be satisfied. The word of God declares to us, in times and ways without number, that by faith in him we are put in such position that our sins are set to his account, and his righteousness to ours. This indeed is the essence of the whole gospel. If this doctrine were taken out of the New Testament, what might be left of it would give us no comfort. But its precepts would still remain, and still be binding on us. The precepts are there now. Are they any the less binding, because God has revealed his mercy on the same pages on which they are recorded? Is the voice of command coming from the Supreme Authority of the universe less obligatory, because he who utters it loves us? The sin against infinite justice seems to be of infinite turpitude; what shall we say when the sin against infinite justice and the sin against infinite mercy are combined?

There is no bottom to our guilt; it is a fathomless abyss; there is no end to it; it cannot be measured. Yet faith in Jesus Christ will take it all away; we shall be delivered from the penalties of sin; we shall be delivered from its power, from the love of it, from the temptation to it, and from the thing itself; and we shall be made as holy in our own persons, as if there were no such thing as sin in the universe; and being perfectly holy, we shall be perfectly happy, and shall dwell forever with God, and with the holy angels.

That all this will be the result of faith in Jesus Christ, is as certain as that the word of God is true. But how shall we know that we have faith in him? We may know that we have faith in him if we love him. But how shall we know that we love him? I shall answer this question presently; but before this, let me say, that faith and love imply each other. He who believes loves, and he who loves believes.

It is impossible that one should have faith in Jesus Christ, in the sense in which faith was described in a former discourse, without loving him ; and it is impossible that one should love the Saviour, without believing in him ; for men never love what they believe to be unreal. If I say that faith and love are twin-sisters, or if I say that faith is the mother and love is the daughter, or if I say in the language of Scripture, that "faith worketh by love," and if I add that it works in no other way,—whatever I may say, I mean that faith and love are inseparable, and that he who has one has the other. Now we repeat the inquiries of a few moments ago. What evidence can we have that we are possessed of the faith that saves ? If we love Christ, we may be sure that we have faith in him. But what evidence have we that we love him ? We cannot trust the testimony of our own hearts ; they have often deceived us before ; they may deceive us now. Is there nothing visible and tangible by which we can reach, at least, a comforting opinion as to whether we love him or not ? Yes, there is plenty that is both visible and tangible. Christ himself supplies us with the touch-stone which is an infallible test. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Do you keep his commandments ? If so, blessed art thou ; if not, cursed art thou. Of course, the instant reply to this will be, "Then we are all cursed ; for none of us keep them fully." God knows our imperfection. He knows that in our depraved state it is impossible for us either to be, or to do, all that his most holy law requires. But he knows, and *we* know, that much is possible ; and not only so, but much that is easy ; and not only so, but much, that if we had a right spirit, would be delightful. Now, judging by this low standard, and in this greatly modified sense, do you keep his commandments ? Our condition is analogous to that of a man who is bankrupt, and who has compounded with his creditors at fifty cents on the dollar. This much he is able, amply



able, to pay. He gives his notes for this amount; and these notes ought to be paid in full. Have you paid in full what you *could* pay? Have you paid half of what you could? Have you paid one-tenth part of it? Have you paid the one-hundredth part of it? There are many who have not paid the smallest sum—the sum last named. The evidence that they love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity is so small as not to be worth noticing; and the evidence that they have faith in him is just as small. I know not where to rank them except with the unbelievers; and all unbelievers are lost. Many a man has made his way through the church of Jesus Christ into perdition. Many a man has professed faith with his lips who shows none of it in his life; and all such professions are vain. Many a man has professed faith not only with his lips, but in the solemn ordinance of baptism, in which the name of the glorious Trinity—of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, was named; and even *that* profession, the most sacred that could be made by a human being, has been but a mockery. I pity the man who has broken a vow so solemn, and so awful! How do we judge whether one has incurred this tremendous guilt? By his after life. “If ye love me, ye *will keep* my commandments.” Those who do not keep his commandments do *not* love him, and those who do not love him have no faith in him, and the faithless are lost. He whose faith and love do not manifest themselves in his daily life, gives evidence that his profession in baptism was either a frightful mistake, or a frightful falsehood.

The religion of Jesus Christ is essentially a religion of *doing*. In some respects this religion claims less than any other, I may say infinitely less, for it claims nothing; no price is paid; salvation is free; nothing is to be done as the ground work of it; we have nothing to do; we have only to believe in what has *been* done, and in him who did it. In

other respects this religion claims more than any other; I may say infinitely more; it claims all; it claims that the whole life shall be dedicated to God; it claims a life of righteous deeds; it claims the choicest treasures, and all the treasures, of the inmost heart. It claims the outward doings as matter of right, and it makes them the evidence of a state of grace, out of which there is no salvation and no hope.

Men have abused the doctrine of salvation by faith, declaring that they exercise that faith, while yet they make no exhibit of the works which that faith, working by love, is certain to produce. "If faith saves," say they, "of what use are works?" The use of works is to please God; and he who has no works to show does not please God; and he who does not please him does not love him; and he who does not love him has no faith in him; and the unbelievers are lost. Another use of works is that their presence is evidence of a gracious state, and their absence is proof of an ungracious state. Another use of them is that many of them benefit and bless our fellow-men in their temporal condition, relieving their wants; and another, and greater use of them is that they are witnesses of the power of the love of Christ; they demonstrate better than any other argument the truth of his teachings, and of his divine claims; they preach his gospel; they win souls to Christ; they hasten the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom; they prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; and when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, it will be the result of human effort, on which the blessing of God has come to give it power.

While then the religion of Jesus is essentially a religion of faith, and is the only one which is, it is also essentially a religion of doing, and is the only one which is completely so. What says our Saviour, who is also our Lawgiver? "If ye

know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." John xiii. 17. "Ye are my friends if ye *do* whatsoever I have commanded you." John xv. 14. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. vii. 21. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth* them *not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Matt. vii. 24-27. "Whosoever shall *do* the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matt. xii. 50.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 16. "Whosoever shall *do*, and teach (these commandments) the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 19. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and *keep* it." Luke xi. 28. Then comes the text: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." John xiv. 15. And here are texts of the same import: "He that hath my commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me." John xiv. 21. "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." John xiv. 24. And these two texts are the exact equivalents of the two propositions into which this morning's text has been analyzed. All the passages that I have quoted are from the words of the Lord himself. Hear now some of his apostles: "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 John ii. 17. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his

commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." 1 John ii. 3-6. And how did he walk? "He went about *DOING*." Acts x. 38. These last quotations have been from John, the apostle of Love. Now let us hear from Paul, the apostle of Justification by Faith, without the deeds of the law: "Faith worketh by love." Gal. v. 6. He speaks of faith as the living principle; love as the motive power, and *works* as the result. Again he says: "Unto them that do not *obey* the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. But glory, honor, and peace, unto every man that worketh good." Rom. ii. 8-10. The very same apostle, whose great mission was to teach that we are saved, not on the ground of obedience to law, describes the fate of the disobedient by the words indignation and wrath and tribulation, and anguish; and the same apostle who teaches the worthlessness of works as the basis of salvation, describes the future of every man that worketh good, by the words glory, honor, and peace. Again he says that we are created (that is by the new birth), "created in Christ Jesus unto *good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. ii. 10. Again, speaking of Christ, he says, that "being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* him." Heb. v. 9. Clearly he makes Christ the author of eternal salvation, and he mentions obedience, not as the fountain of it, but as the stream that runs from the fountain. And finally he says: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be justified." Rom. ii. 13.

Surely Paul, the great advocate of justification by faith,

s ys enough about *doing*. Even in the Epistle to the Romans, whose great object is to set forth this doctrine, five whole chapters, out of the sixteen, are devoted to the setting forth of good works. Having closed his argument in the first eleven chapters, he begins the twelfth with these words: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"; and the remainder of the Epistle, five chapters, consists of little else than a catalogue of practical duties, with exhortations to discharge them. And with the exception of the doxology at the close, the very last words of the Epistle, are these, "*the obedience of faith,*" that is, the obedience which springs from faith.

Now comes the Apostle James, who says: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James iv. 17. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James i. 22. "Faith, if it have not works, is dead." James ii. 17.

It is the peculiarity of the gospel that, while it casts away good works with one hand, it puts them in the fore-front with the other. It casts them aside as saviours, or as means of salvation, and pronounces them worthless. On the other hand, it brings them out as of supremest obligation, and as fruitage, as the results, and therefore as the signs of salvation already wrought, by means wholly aside from them. The saints of God are saved, not in heaven, but here, *here* on the earth; the good works are part of the salvation, for "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"; and heaven hereafter is the other part; the good works on earth are part of the heavenly life, and therefore are heaven begun. The employment is heavenly, the motive is heavenly, the results are heavenly, and the rewards are heavenly. Aside from our text, and from the other teachings of

Scripture, what better evidence can a man give that he is on the way to the heavenly city than this: that he is all the time doing heavenly things, and that, too, with heavenly feelings? On the other hand, what stronger evidence can a man give that he is unsaved, and that there is no heaven for him than this: that he is doing none of the things that heavenly-minded people do, none of the things which show that he has love for him whose blood alone makes heaven accessible, and none of the things which show that he has faith in him; and that he lives in habitual disobedience to the God of heaven, disregarding his law, and practically ignoring his authority?

Let each one of us apply these principles to his own case. Perhaps one will say: "I think my case is hopeful. I have tried to keep the Commandments; I have been honest and truthful; I have kept myself pure; I read the Bible daily, and say my prayers regularly; I attend most of the religious meetings, and contribute somewhat to the support of religious and benevolent enterprises." Have you done all this? Then indeed your religious record is better than that of the average church-member. Yet the argument to be drawn from this record is very unsatisfactory. Your life appears to be one of indifference. If you have faith in Christ, you love him, and it would seem that so strong a passion as love would produce greater results than these. Love is the strongest motive power in the universe. Where this great force is in operation, we look for something great to come of it; but there is nothing great in the account that you give of yourself. There is, it is true, a languid compliance with law, in not doing the things which are forbidden; and a still more languid compliance in doing *some* of the things which are required; but all this might be done from habit, or from education, or from compliance with custom. Your circumstances in life may have cut these grooves for you, and you

may slide along in them with a motive power immeasurably less than the love of Christ. Such a life gives but poor evidence of saving faith. Your evidence is mostly of the negative kind; it shows what you do not do that is positively wrong, but of actual *doing* there is very little. Religious life does not consist in mere abstinence from wrong; it is not a dead inertia; it is an aggressive force, an executive power, an ever-living, and ever-forth-putting energy. Activity, ceaseless activity, is its law. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Can a man do this without being intent and eager on his Father's business? And will he have much spare time to dedicate to idleness? "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If a man's heart is full of this law, and if he does all that is implied, or half of it, will his life be an inactive one? If a man keeps both these laws, or honestly attempts to keep them, will his life be listless and indolent? How is it possible, even with the most liberal construction, that anything can be regarded as a half-way compliance, or even as the tithe of a compliance with this law, which does not involve great effort, and great self sacrifice? Does the sluggish life of the ordinary so-called Christian give any very satisfying evidence that there is in his heart the prodigious motive power called the love of Christ? He abstains from out-breaking sin; he reads his Bible, and says his prayers, and attends church, and once in a month is seen at a prayer-meeting, and contributes moderately of his substance in support of the Lord's cause. Is this all that the love of Christ can do? It can do a thousand times more. Why, then, does it not do it? It is easy to suppose that the reason why it does not do it is, that it is not there. I judge no one, but I pray each one to judge himself. How many sick have you visited? How many hungry have you fed? How many naked have you clothed? How many homeless have you

housed? These are prominent among the *doings* that are to be done, under the teachings of the gospel, and under the law of love, which is the law of God. How many ignorant have you instructed? How many distressed souls have you comforted? How many of the saints have you strengthened in the faith, by your conversations and counsels? How many wayward ones have you warned and persuaded? How many can bless you for benefits conferred by you, spiritual or temporal? How much better is the world for your having been in it? And how much has all this cost you? How much of your time and of your personal exertion? How much of your substance? What proportion of it? How much gospel is preached by your daily life? By your influence, example, and character? Suppose that every Christian had as little *do* in him as there is in you, what would become of the cause of practical benevolence? What would become of the world's poor, and of its unfortunates? What would become of the cause of true religion? What progress would be made by the kingdom of Christ, which advances nowhere except where it is carried forward by human agency?

It is said that on a recent occasion sixteen persons united with Mr. Spurgeon's church in London; when it was publicly stated by the pastor, that two of these had been brought into the kingdom by his instrumentality, and that the other fourteen were brought to a saving knowledge of the truth in Jesus by the members of the church. How much work of this kind have *you* done? Where are your trophies? Where are the witnesses of your beneficence?

Brethren, ask yourselves these questions, and draw your own conclusions. These conclusions, in many cases, may be very painful. They may throw great doubt on the genuineness of your profession. They may put you in the dreadful condition of a man who has publicly put on Christ by baptism, and whose heart is a stranger to grace. You may well



ask me: "What shall I do?" Certainly you have reason to ask that question, and to ask it with tears, and with terror. You will find the answer to the question in the word of God. Read it for yourselves.

Without reference to any particular case, or class of cases, let me address my appeal to the whole brotherhood. Would it not be well for us all to begin at the beginning, and regard ourselves as unconverted sinners; and with the light which we have gained by our experience and study, to do for ourselves just what we should advise an unconverted man to do, if he were to come to us for counsel? Let us look at the law of God, and see how holy it is, and how reasonable, and how right, and how necessary, and how exacting, and how inexorable. Let us look at our sin in violating this law, and see how enormous it is, and how frightful its consequences must be. Let us look at ourselves, and see how guilty we are, and how helpless. Let us look to Christ, and see how great he is; mighty to save; able to save even to the uttermost all who come to God by him. Let us trust in him; believing what he says of himself, and what is said of him in the word of God; believing it with joy and with confidence; believing *in* him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; relying on his person with assurance of safety. As soon as we do this we shall stand justified before God; we shall be saved; and our salvation will begin right here; and will immediately show itself in good works, which we cannot keep from doing. The salvation of our God prompts a man to good works; and so prompts him that he cannot be restrained from doing them. The religion of the Bible is a religion of doing; and when that religion is in a man's heart, no power on earth can prevent his doing. "If ye love me, ye *will* keep my commandments." Jesus Christ is responsible for saying that the consequence is a necessary one. It is necessary in the eternal nature of things.

Let us then set out afresh ; and let us all begin at once. Let us begin like a whole congregation of new converts, on whose minds the light has just broken in, and whose hearts for the first time feel the love of Christ constraining them. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God ; and now let us be *doing*. Let each one find out for himself some way of doing good ; yea, various ways. This is now a practical thing ; there are no theories either to trouble us, or to amuse us ; let us come down to the actual realities of this matter-of-fact life. There is no poetry and no romance in this business ; much of it is very trying, and very perplexing, and very wearisome ; but if the love of Christ is in these hearts of ours, we can dispense with the poetry, and go into the work. Let everybody do good to somebody. Let us do good to those that are near, and to those that are afar. The whole world is none too large to take into a heart that has been expanded by the love of Christ. Let us have ever before our eyes the *royal* law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And who is my neighbor ? Any one who is made in the image of God ; any for whom Christ died. And how many neighbors have I ? Fourteen hundred millions ! And can I do good to all these ? There is no telling how many of them you can enlighten. A solitary ray of light shot forth from the sun may illuminate, to some degree, the hemisphere, at least, of a planet. Whatever may be the result, you are responsible for the effort.

Oh ! could we all join our hearts and hands together, and simultaneously take a new departure ! I, for one, should be astonished if Pentecost were not to repeat itself. At any rate, we should be doing what the word of God requires. We should be only doing our duty at last. But in this discharge of duty we should glorify God ; and to glorify God is all that the angels in heaven can do. Christ, whose love constrains us, asks it of us. Can we refuse him ?

Strange to say, the world, this wicked world, expects this life of consecration from us. It is a wicked and adulterous generation, and it seeks a sign. There is a sign which it has a right to expect. "Show us your gospel in the concrete," say they. "Let us see how it works in practice. What kind of men does it make? Put it to its best, and let us see what it can do." The world clamors for preaching—for *this* kind of preaching. And verily this kind of preaching is a power. A holy life is the grandest of sermons, the most convincing of arguments, the most persuasive of appeals. It puts under arrest the world's attention, its admiration, and its homage. It stops the mouths of the gainsayers; it puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and sweeps away the sophistries of learned men.

On the other hand, the sluggish life that we lead, the little difference that there is between us and those who make no profession of religion, is the greatest stumbling-block in the way of sinners—the greatest obstacle to the world's conversion. Our lives are a reproach to the gospel—to the very gospel by which we hope to be saved!

Let us break away from the old paths, and make a new start, as if for life. Then, even if we fail of success, in doing good to others, the effort will react on ourselves. The best way for a man to benefit himself, is to try to benefit somebody else. Work develops grace. The *doers* of the word are they who enjoy its blessings.

Arouse! ye men of Israel, and come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Then will ye have peace of mind—and *not till then!* There is not a happy man in the house. And why? Because there is not a consistent Christian here. Peace of conscience, perfect peace—who has it? Not one! In consecration there may be sacrifice, but there *is* joy. Our highest pleasure is when we please God. Oh, the pleasure, the rapture of doing good,

and being good ! A holy life is the ante-chamber to heaven. Would you like to know that the tie of friendship, of everlasting friendship, exists between you and the Lord Jesus ? Would you like to see convincing evidence ? Do whatsoever he has commanded you, and you have the argument which he himself has furnished.

## SERMON IX.

### NEGLECT OF THE GREAT SALVATION.

“How shall we escapè, if we neglect so great salvation?”—  
HEBREWS ii. 3.

GREAT is the salvation of the gospel! It is great on account of what it saves us from; great on account of what it saves us to; great on account of the manner in which it is brought about.

I. In the first place, it saves us from our sins. The atonement wrought by our Saviour had a far higher aim than merely to purchase our pardon; its greater objects were to procure for us a deliverance from those sinful dispositions which make pardon necessary, as well as from the moral deterioration and degradation consequent upon guilt. He was called Jesus, because he should save his people from their *sins*. Matt. i. 21. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all *sin*.” 1 John i. 7. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our *transgressions* from us.” Ps. ciii. 12. By nature we are all corrupt. Every human being that is born in the world exhibits evil proclivities as soon as it is possible for him to do so. As we advance in life we find that from childhood onward, so thorough is our bias to do wrong, that we do it, even when we are trying to do right. We have all tried to be better than we are; but with every endeavor to live as we ought, we cannot succeed. What a commentary is this on human nature! So totally corrupt, so thoroughly depraved, that we cannot live as we know we ought to live, for one day or one hour! We

know what the apostle meant when he said: "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Rom. vii. 21.<sup>1</sup> Even in our holiest moments, we feel that the contamination of sin still clings to us. So familiar are we with the fact of our depravity, that the thought of it awakens in us no alarm. But familiarity with a dreadful fact does not diminish its dreadfulness. Suppose a physician or friend, meeting you, were suddenly and unexpectedly to assure you that he saw in your face unmistakable symptoms of some frightful disease, like the small-pox, or like the plague, that awful scourge which visited London two hundred years ago; would not the announcement thrill you with horror? But the gospel assures you, and so does your own consciousness, that you have a more dreadful malady than ever tortured a human body. Sin is the greatest evil in the universe; it is a disease of the soul; it is the worst evil that could possibly befall the soul. In the bottomless pit there is no poison more virulent, and this poison has diffused itself through your whole moral nature. Perhaps you will say: "If sin is so awful an evil, why do I not feel the effects of it?" This is like one who has the fatal plague-spot on his cheek and who says: "The plague cannot be as bad as it is represented, for they say I have it, and I am sure I am not suffering a great deal." Yes, but do you not feel some unpleasant symptoms? Do not flatter yourself. These are only premonitions of what is to come; and the grief when it comes, will be none the less poignant because its earlier symptoms were endurable. No man can say that he has felt *none* of the effects of sin. Aside from all the pains and labors and sorrows of life, which but for sin would never have been experienced, all men's consciences sometimes sting them. A sense of guilt will at times dart twinges through every man's soul. Have you

<sup>1</sup> A heathen poet bears the same testimony: "Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor."—*Horace*.

never felt at least an uneasiness, sometimes painful concern, in view of the fact that you are a sinner? These unhappy moments are but presages of the future. The distemper is in your soul, but the time for it to break out and ruin has not yet come. Every unhappy moment, every misgiving as to your state and prospects, is evidence that the time is coming. In this life we experience, even at the worst, nothing more than the first feeble symptoms of the misery of sin. The most appalling feature of the disorder is, that it is destined to grow worse and worse to all eternity. Some diseases of the body take a certain time to run their course, and are then exhausted. It takes *this* disease eternity to run its course, and its venom is never exhausted. It is always tending towards its acme, but never reaches it. Dropping the figure, it is the nature of sin to reproduce itself, and multiply itself, and exacerbate itself. Suppose, unregenerate man, that you die in your present state. The sinfulness of your nature, being wholly unrestrained, would develop itself fully. Every circumstance around you would tend to make you more wicked. With nothing to check your downward career, and with a whole world full of lost spirits to hasten it, how much progress would you make in a thousand years? If the mind expands, as expand it must with increasing experiences; if progress is the law of moral and accountable beings—it is but fair to infer that the period will come, at some point in eternity, when the man who dies in sin will have reached a deeper degree of guilt than perdition has ever yet witnessed. One thing at least is certain; it is not possible to exaggerate eternity, nor to exaggerate the horror of sin prolonged to eternity. Yet this is the condition to which human nature tends, and to which every human being, unless changed in nature, must come. We recoil from the prospect, yet strange as it may seem, our nature, instead of restraining, urges us on to the very state which we so much

dread. We have all tried to keep from sin in this life, where its power is but partially developed, and where there are a thousand restraints operating on it; and we have tried in vain. How then can we succeed in the coming world, where the distemper shall have put on its full strength,—where there is nothing to check, and everything to aggravate?

Now then suppose that a salvation full and free were proclaimed, from the evil of sin! Would it not be a *great* salvation? Would it not be worthy even of the Lord God Omnipotent? This is the salvation that the gospel offers. It exhibits to us more clearly than we could ever otherwise have seen, the greatness of that gospel; it shows us that sin is the monster evil of eternity, and promises complete deliverance. The very conception of such things is found nowhere but in the word of God. Men never saw sin as it is there set forth, and until revelation came, no man ever dreamed of the great salvation.

II. The gospel is great on account of what it saves us *to*.

It promises to lead those who embrace it to a state of moral perfection. What a conception is this? Who ever thought of such a thing until the living oracles taught it! Depraved as we are, moral excellence commands our admiration and our homage. Let us picture to ourselves the character of one who is kind, forgiving, and gentle; dignified, yet approachable; childlike in simplicity, yet majestic in mien; wise beyond measure; generous, honorable, high-minded, inflexible in integrity; brave, yet tender; stern before error, yet patient with the weak; wholly unselfish, and with a great heart full of love to all. Would it not be a great exaltation to any one of us to be made like such a man? Suppose there were some fountain whose waters, if we were to drink them, would transfuse into us all these pure, and noble, and angel-like qualities. Should we not haste to quaff the heavenly beverage, and drink, and drink, and drink forever?



The gospel is that fountain! It not only cleanses from all sin, but when its work is done, it will make its subjects resplendent with every virtue exercised in heaven. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him." (1 John iii. 2.) If glory will be revealed *to* us, such as eye never saw nor ear heard, what shall we say of the glory that shall be revealed *in* us (Rom. viii. 18), when this mortal shall have put on immortality? We shall "bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. xv. 49.) The wrapt Psalmist, looking forward to the glorious moment when he should burst through death into perfect purity, exclaimed, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." (Ps. xvii. 15.) Such is the aspiration of the saints; nothing less will satisfy them than to be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. Nor is it a vain hope, for the gospel abounds with assurances in various forms that the spirits of the just will be made perfect. Without holiness shall no man see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14); from which we learn that the moment the freed spirit enters into the Holy Presence, it becomes holy. But this is not all. It is not to be supposed that so good a thing as development in excellence is confined to earth and excluded from heaven. The law of improvement under culture is stamped on everything that has life. It is also true that as we ascend in the scale, as qualities become more glorious, they become more and more susceptible of improvement; thought and feeling—the most Godlike qualities of all—being more capable of development in power and excellence than anything else. Can we suppose that this sublime law prevails all over the universe of God, except within his own abode, where above every other place there would be room for its operation? Are they who "see God" and who must be learning forever more and more of the depths of the unsearchable riches and wisdom and glory of the Infinite—are they the only beings who are not profited by increase of

knowledge, and by glorious surroundings? Is the knowledge of God and heaven, the only knowledge that does not expand and bless those who obtain it? Are the saved in heaven the only creatures of God who are doomed to be forever stationary, whom no labor nor culture can benefit? Imagine then a human soul, cleansed from every taint and trace of sin, progressing in moral excellence, to eternity. Perhaps too, the degrees of progress will be inconceivably rapid. A moment in eternity may be more than a thousand years in time. In this progress who can doubt that the intellectual will keep pace with the moral? And if so, we shall make attainments as sublime in wisdom as Godlike in virtue. The period may come when some of the saints now living in the world will have attained to more moral splendor, and more intellectual grandeur, and more personal majesty, than has yet been reached by the brightest of the angels. The principle must forever hold good, that there is no such thing as standing still in morals; we must either improve or deteriorate. Following the principle into eternity, we are led to see that if the unsaved become baser than fiends, the saved must become more glorious than the angels. At any rate, they will be prepared for the inheritance that is prepared for them, and that inheritance will be co-extensive with Christ's, and they will be one with Christ, even as he and the Father are one. (John xvii. 23.) How splendid the destiny of those who are the subjects of the atonement! Yet what less could be expected as the result of the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son? What less could be accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world? What inferior end could be proposed when God became manifest in the flesh, when Christ was crucified and died? See what the gospel saves us from! See what it saves us to! In this sublime antithesis we see something of the greatness of the great salvation.

Yet we have seen but half the glory. We have been regarding only the evil of sin in itself, and the excellence of holiness in itself. But the gospel saves us from the consequences of the one, and to the rewards of the other.

III. It saves us from the penalty of sin. That penalty is the eternal wrath of Almighty God. The word of God declares the place of the wicked to be a lake of fire and brimstone. Whether the language be literal, or whether it be figurative, it is perhaps impossible to determine, nor is it important. Wicked men seem to derive a comfort, poor though it be, from the hope that the language is figurative. But if there be comfort in this construction, that fact would seem to show that it is a wrong construction. For what comfort can there be in *any* view of actual perdition? Men try to soothe themselves with the shallow delusion that, because the language may be figurative, the facts described must be unreal. They ask, sometimes with an air of ridicule: "Will the flame be *real* flame?" Yes: whether it be material and tangible is of small importance. When the wrath of the Almighty shall wrap itself around the soul of the damned, the writhing spirit will forget all inquiries about figures of speech, and will be agonizingly aware that the vengeance of Jehovah, in whatever form manifested, is sufficiently real, and infinitely dreadful. But lest any should still try to take comfort from the persuasion that the Bible description of the world of woe is "after all only a figure of speech," let it be observed that if it be a figure, that fact only shows that no literal language could possibly describe the reality, and that the figure was resorted to only as a second choice. The figure, if it be one, has reference only to material things, whereas the facts pertain to spiritual things; and as wide as the distance is between mind and matter, just so wide must be the distance between the figure in question and the facts it illustrates, but fails to describe. Men may philosophize and

quibble and scoff, but one thing is certain; and that is, that the Eternal Potentate whose wrath the sinner provokes is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. x. 28. Facts are fearful things; and it is the fact, that every sinful man is liable to all that can be meant on any interpretation whatever, by "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. i. 9. It is the fact, O brother, sinful man, that you cannot save yourself from the dreadful doom! It is the fact also, that the gospel *can* save you! The glorious gospel of the blessed God! It works miracles. It is omnipotent. So far as the redeemed are concerned, the lake of fire is quenched. The rivers of God's love have inundated it, and swept it away, so that its place is not found. Wherever the ransomed spirit goes the Spirit of God goes with him, and thus the universe is heaven. This is the great, the great salvation.

IV. The gospel not only makes us holy, but gives us the rewards of holiness. Virtue is to some extent its own reward. Blessing is inwrought into its very nature. But that happiness which is the natural product of virtue, is not all that is in store for the redeemed of the gospel. God has prepared a place for them. He who knows every capacity of the human soul, knows how to provide a corresponding source of enjoyment for each. If he who formed the eye knows how to combine beautiful colors on the landscape or in the sky, so as to please it; if he who formed the ear regulates the vibrations of the atmosphere in such a way as to gratify that organ, so he who formed the sublimer capacities of glorified spirits knows how to gratify their vision with sights such as we never saw, and how to thrill their hearts with divine melody, one strain of which, if we could hear it, would waft us away on its balmy wing to the spirit-world.

In our present state, the perception of truth is one of our noblest sources of enjoyment. In the light of eternity we

shall doubtless see truth as no mortal ever saw it. Even here, with our meaner capacities, when the perception of a sublime truth bursts upon us, we can sometimes scarcely refrain from shouting with joy. There, truth after truth may flash upon the mind in eternal succession, like suns one after another launched into the firmament. The soul would be overpowered by the display, but it expands commensurately, and the act of expansion is itself another source of joy, which floods us with delight. The social feelings and affections are, in this life, sources of our dearest and tenderest delights. But where we have a loved one here we may have a thousand there; every tendril of our hearts here may contain the germs of myriads more, that will develop in eternity. The deepest ardor that ever glowed in a human heart may be but lukewarmness to the love that burns in the bosoms of the blest. Our tastes are here the source of some of our most refined enjoyments. But it may be that our most delicate sensibilities are but coarse and dull, compared with the subtle and ethereal fibre of spirit-life. It is delightful and it is ennobling, in this life, to contemplate mentally, and at a distance, the characters of the wise and great and good, even such as earth produces. But what is this to the blessing pronounced on the pure in heart, who "shall see God!"

However grand our ideals may be of the heavenly state, we know that, compared with the real, they are vain, meagre, and wretched. The very word of God itself presents the glories of the upper world in terms of awe-inspiring mystery. Let it suffice for us, without endeavoring to conceive the inconceivable, to know that in his presence is fullness of joy, and that at his right hand there are pleasures forevermore. To introduce us into this glorious state of perpetual bliss, to crown us with the highest order and degree of happiness which infinite wisdom, power, and love have prepared for

moral beings—this is the work of the gospel. This is the work of the gospel; this is the salvation it brings. Angels and glorified spirits, who know its rewards, can appreciate better than we the great salvation.

V. But we have been looking at the results rather than at the cause; perhaps we can obtain a more adequate conception of the grandeur of the former by regarding for a moment the infinity of the latter. The salvation of the gospel is great on account of the vastness of the sacrifice which was made to accomplish it. This, indeed, seems to have been the prominent thought in the mind of the apostle when he wrote the text, for he introduces it by a whole chapter of praise to him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Heb. i. Filled as his mind was with conceptions of the greatness and glory of the Saviour, it was by an easy transition that he spoke of the greatness of the salvation. "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin." The blood that was shed for us was the blood of the only-begotten Son of God. It was no angel that was sacrificed. The expression of God's displeasure against sin which was made on Calvary, was more tremendous than if a thousand hecatombs of angels had been sacrificed and laid as a holocaust upon the smoking altar. We cannot understand the mystery of God manifest in the flesh. Doubtless this will be one of the truths which in eternity will burst upon our astonished vision. Now, we only know that, "His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." We only know that, in a mystery, the "Mighty God" became identified with the man Christ Jesus, who was crucified, thus imparting to the sacrifice all the dignity which the Almighty can either confer or possess. That must be a great salvation to accomplish which Infinite Wisdom had resort to means so stupendous. Glorious are all the works of God; but this

work of his grace would seem to be a crowning glory. Great, great is the salvation of the gospel!

Yet there are those who neglect it! Hear, O Heavens! and be amazed, O Earth! there are those who neglect the great salvation! How shall they escape! How *can* they escape! Sinner, living in neglect of the gospel, how do you expect to escape? Contemplate for a moment the guilt of one who treats with cold neglect the greatest manifestation of goodness that God ever made.

1. He shows, in the first place, that he does not care to be saved from *sin*. The gospel would deliver him from his depraved and wicked nature, but he will have no such deliverance. He does not desire to be free from sin; all horrid as its pollution is, he does not wish to be cleansed from it. He sees that its tendency is to make him forever and ever more sinful, yet he is not willing to relinquish it. He sees the awful, the diabolical extreme to which it leads, yet he cherishes it. He may even experience the pangs of conviction, but at the very time that he feels the sting of sin he still clings to it. He neglects the gospel, which is the only thing that can destroy its power. How can he escape? There is salvation from sin, but he neglects the gospel which brings it; thus involving himself in deeper guilt than would be possible in a world which no gospel had ever reached, committing a crime which devils cannot commit. How can he escape?

2. He sees the glorious estate of virtue and holiness to which the gospel saves its subjects; he admires it; he is enraptured with its contemplation; yet he neglects the gospel which alone can lead him to that holiness. How evidently he shows that, while he pays the tribute of his intellect to moral goodness, he has no appreciation of it in his heart, and no desire to be personally holy. Instead of giving himself up to this gospel, he is engrossed with the poor, perishing business or pleasure of this transitory world. He might

become more exalted in excellence than the very seraphs in heaven, but he neglects the gospel which is the means of it. By giving his attention to the things of this life, he decides that he prefers them; and thus throws contempt on that state of purity and holiness to which the gospel would raise him. How can he escape?

3. He knows that heaven is bestowed on those who embrace the gospel. Yet such is his aversion to that gospel, that for the sake of heaven itself he will not embrace it. All the joys that are at God's right hand cannot tempt him. How deep and how bitter must be his hostility to that gospel! It alone can save him, and it he neglects. How can he escape? Ought he ever to escape?

4. He knows that eternal perdition awaits those who neglect the gospel. But even the flames of hell, that flash up before him, do not prevent him from going right on! He hears the voice of God calling to him, in solemn inquiry: "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter iv. 17), but he does not heed it. He hears the awful denunciation: "He that believeth not shall be damned." But in his life he scoffs at the Almighty, dares his vengeance, and persists in neglect! How can he escape? Will the Almighty spare him? Must not outraged justice overtake him? Is there any mercy left for those who have repudiated and rejected all mercy? The gospel which is the embodiment of mercy, of infinite mercy, he neglects. How can he escape?

5. He knows that the Son of God became incarnate and was crucified to effect this salvation, yet he neglects it. God from eternity premeditated this great salvation, yet he will scarcely regard it for a moment; and thus he casts contempt on God's most cherished plan. The blood of the atonement was shed for him, yet he scorns it. He thinks more of a petty transaction in his business than he does of that



stupendous transaction which brought this great salvation to the world.

Suppose he perseveres in all this. Suppose he perseveres in clinging to sin, although the gospel can save him from it; suppose he persists in refusing that holiness which the gospel can confer; suppose he continues to disregard the awful sanctions of the eternal world; suppose above all that he will persist to the end, in trampling on the blood of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world—*how can he escape?* Can the mind of man suggest a mode of escape? Can the heart of man *hope* for one? There is no escape! And in the last great day all such will call to the mountains and to the rocks, and will say, “O mountains! O rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!”

Perhaps the amiable and upright unbeliever is still unimpressed with the “terrors of the Lord,” and flatters himself that, because he is not conscious of great and outbreking sin, his case is hopeful, and that his fate will at least be mild. Good friend, the most solemn thought perhaps which the text suggests has not occurred to you. The mere *neglect* of the gospel will shut you out of the great salvation. No great positive crime is needed; the mere negative sin of neglect will insure your destruction. The text does not speak of atheists, and infidels, and murderers, nor of any who transgress in open and outrageous crime. It speaks of those who merely neglect. They may not despise the gospel; they may even respect it; still they disregard it, they pass it by. This is enough. This seals their fate. If a man does not embrace the gospel, of what use is it to him? No matter how great this salvation is; if a man refuses it, how can it benefit him? Not to act, is to act. Not to receive the gospel, to neglect it, is to reject it; and how can he escape who *rejects* so great salvation? No matter how amiable his life, or how spotless

his integrity among men, if he spurns the greatest gift of Infinite Love, how can he escape?

While we are dwellers in this present state the preacher of the gospel is authorized to offer its blessings to all. There may be some who have sinned away their day of grace; doubtless there are. Though the invitations of the gospel are freely held out to such, and they are at liberty to accept it if they will, yet God will not help them, nor incline their hearts to accept the proffered mercy. They are joined to their idols, and God will let them alone. Of what use is even the gospel to the God-forsaken soul, who has no help from on high, to avail himself of it? The doom of such is already sealed.

But to all others condescending mercy still calls, "Turn ye! turn ye! why will ye die?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Incarnate Goodness still reasons with them, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Jsa. i. 18.) Bleeding Love still appeals to them in the prayer from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know what they do!" thus exemplifying to them, and to a world full of sinners, that the murder of the Lord of glory did not exclude the murderers from his intercessions, nor from the benefit of the blood which their own hands had shed. You who have crucified the Lord afresh, come look on him whom you have pierced! Hear him intercede for your enormous sin, in neglecting the great salvation which he brought. Believe the assurance of his word, which declares that his blood "cleanseth from all sin," and though you have long neglected, you may still accept, and in eternity forever enjoy, **THE GREAT SALVATION!**

## SERMON X.

### *THE POSITION OF BAPTISM IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.*

“Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”—MATTHEW iii. 15.

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”—MARK xvi. 16.

MANKIND are prone to two evil intellectual habits: one is to look at only one side of a question, and the other is to carry the partial view thus obtained to an extreme. Nowhere are these unfortunate tendencies more conspicuous than in the domain of religion, and on no subject, perhaps, more than on the subject of baptism. Owing to extreme and one-sided views, its importance is overrated by some, and underrated by others.

The former class attribute to it a power which is supernatural, miraculous, omnipotent. In their view, it has the power of creating the soul anew. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; and baptism brings him into Christ. Baptism is essential to regeneration, or rather it *is* regeneration. Without regeneration there is no salvation, and without baptism there is no regeneration. All who are regenerate are saved, and all who are baptized are regenerate. Baptism is therefore all in all. More is not needed; less is perdition. In the last day, those to whom the Judge will say, “Come, ye blessed,” are the baptized; and those to whom he will say, “Depart, ye cursed,” are the unbaptized.

Some of the greatest extremists might accept these results; others, less logical, will not accept the results, while yet they hold to the principles that lead to them. Having merely stated this view, without argument either for or against it, it is enough to say that it greatly overrates the value of baptism, and is wholly unsupported by Scripture.

Another class regard baptism as a mere form. The most consistent of them regard it as a useless ceremony, and discard it altogether. Others retain the rite, but lay little stress on it. In their opinion, the place it occupies as a human duty is an insignificant one; they speak of it as a non-essential, and therefore as a thing not worthy of any very great consideration. Many persons are lost with it, and many are saved without it; and hence any great time or attention bestowed on this is so much taken away from the weightier matters of the law. Without arguing the question, suffice it to say that, in our opinion, this view underrates the value and importance of baptism, and is not countenanced by the word of God. Strange to say, however, persons who entertain this view are sometimes in haste to administer the ordinance of baptism to a dying person; and this shows that, after all, they are unsettled in their minds, and also that the transition is easy from one extreme to its opposite.

But what *is* baptism? Certainly it is a form, but it is not a *mere* form. The word *mere* strips the form of all its adjuncts, and leaves nothing *but* the form. Baptism is clearly more than this; for—

1. *It is an act of obedience.* Now, obedience to God is as high a function as any moral being can perform. It is the carrying out of the purposes of infinite wisdom and goodness. The least act of obedience is a great act. Not one jot nor tittle of the law of God is unworthy of the source whence it came; and he who obeys in the least particular is thus far in harmony with the Almighty; and, in doing the will of the

Supreme, he is doing that which ennobles himself and glorifies his Maker. In what way can a man or an angel more grandly exalt himself? In what way can he better serve his God? To say that such an act is a mere form because it *involves* a form, is to lose sight of the God who has commanded it.

2. It is but a slight variation from the preceding thought to say that, so far as baptism is a form, *it is a prescribed form*, and therefore the peer of anything else that is prescribed. "Whoso shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill," and he also it is who has prescribed the form we have spoken of. There is the same authority for this that there is for any other duty. It is part of the law of God; and to disparage any part of that law is to disparage the whole of it. God's law is a unit; God's law is virtually himself; *it is himself expressed*. To speak lightly of *it* is to speak lightly of *him*; and to say that anything which he has commanded is simply a form, a *mere form*, a naked form, and *nothing but* a form, would seem to be a shocking irreverence. If it is not taking the *name* of God in vain, it is at least speaking vainly of the *law* of God; and if there be a distinction in these kinds of profanity, it is not needful now to trace it.

3. *Baptism is an act of worship*. All work is worship; especially all righteousness is worship; and especially is *this* act of righteousness an act of worship, because there is nothing in the nature of things which requires it; in this act we obey no instinct, no dictate of mere reason, nor of unenlightened conscience. It is done in homage to no abstract principle of right, if there be any such principle; it is done as unto God. It is done *purely* for him, and therefore would seem to be worship in a higher sense than almost anything else that we do. If it is glory to the angels to cast

their crowns at his feet, so also it is glory to us to cast ourselves at his feet, as we do when, subjecting our wills to his, we obey his word. Worship formulated is none the less worship; and if God himself is the formulator, that fact would seem to invest the worship with higher dignity and greater acceptableness.

4. *Baptism is also an act of imitation.* The Son of God set us the example, and in so doing he uttered the word "Thus." True, this word was addressed directly to John, and had reference to the act immediately to be performed. But what was duty for the actors in that scene is duty for all; what was duty then is duty now. The disciples afterwards baptized under the immediate order of our Lord, and hence we know that what he then inaugurated he intended to be continued; and if the act is continued, why may we not couple with it the words which first accompanied it? May we not extend the meaning of the word *thus*, and consider it as addressed not only to John, but to all of us? Otherwise, why was the record made? If any lovers of our Lord had stood on the banks of the Jordan and witnessed the scene, would they not have understood him, in the use of the word *thus*, accompanied by the act, to describe duty for them? We stand on the banks. We witness the scene. We witness other baptisms administered by his order, and doubtless in his presence, and hence may consider ourselves addressed in the word *thus*. It is as if Christ had said, "I am your model; here is your pattern; what I am doing it becomes you to do." If there be any doubt in language, there is none in action. The act, the fact to be witnessed, is the thing to be done. It is always safe to follow the example of Christ, and perilous it is to refuse to do so, when he has declared that he *intended* it to be followed. Not to obey is to disobey; and if obedience to God be our highest glory, disobedience is our greatest disgrace and our greatest destruction. To disobey

when we are *told* what to do is a certain grade of crime; but to disobey when we are not only told, but *shown* what to do, would seem to be a higher grade of crime. When he who was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, submitted to the ordinance of baptism, and, virtually summoning the whole world to hear, said "THUS," he dignified the form into something *more* than a form. He made it a part of his history, and thus glorified it for eternity; and at the same time he made it part of our duty, and thus exalted us to the privilege of being so far, at least, in union with him. It is no small thing to say that his history is our history. It is a privilege to know that in any one single thing we have done exactly what he did. That far, at least, we know our record is honorable and glorious. Christ said to Simon and Andrew, "Follow me!" Shall we confine the call to these? His whole life is an embodiment of the same words as addressed to us all. Follow thee! Yes, precious Saviour! we follow thee with joy! Blessed are they who follow! Blessed are they who walk in his footsteps! If we would be conformed to his image, let us conform to his actions. If God said once to Moses, "See thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount," and if Moses showed his greatest wisdom in exact obedience, and if he would have shown greatest folly in speaking of this as a mere form, so when Christ has said to us, as he does by the word *thus*, "See thou do all things according to the pattern I showed thee in baptism," we shall be wise indeed if we copy the pattern, and foolish indeed if we speak lightly of it. No, it is not a mere form; it is an adaptation of ourselves, thus far, at least, to him.

5. *Baptism is an act of consecration.* It is the outward expression of an inward act. It is the visible embodiment of a sentiment—the sentiment of consecration. The body is

made subservient to the behests of the soul, and gives itself to baptism as the soul gives itself to God. Admit that this inward consecration might exist without the outward act, it is still true that no sentiment takes as thorough possession of us unexpressed as when expressed; and be sure that the form of expression which God has selected will most intensify the sentiment, and better than any other subserve its purpose.

6. *But baptism is more than an act of private consecration; it is an act of public profession.* It is an announcement to the world that we are Christ's. It is the act by which we commit ourselves openly to him and to his cause. It is the public putting on of Christ; and surely to put on Christ is not a mere form. Putting on Christ is what an angel cannot do. It is what cannot be done in heaven; in no part of the universe except on *earth* can this glorious deed be done.

7. *Baptism is an act of symbolic meaning;* and while it is a profession of faith, it also teaches by emblem the principles of the faith that is professed. Divine truth is taught in *actions* prescribed by the divine will, no less than in *words* so prescribed. Baptism is an expression, brief but comprehensive, of the leading doctrines of the New Testament. It is itself a Testament; it is itself the word of God. Pregnant with infinite meaning, it is the most condensed and most intensive utterance, in symbol, of revealed truth that God has vouchsafed to us; or, at least if it has a peer, it is found only in that other ordinance in which we show forth the Lord's death until he comes. To speak lightly of this, to regard it as a form and nothing but a form, is to be blind to almost heavenly glory.

When the King of kings and Lord of lords issues sovereign mandates to his holy angels, can we suppose that they regard any one of them as a mere form? Would those glorified ones so trifle with that which has for its authority, *Thus*



*saith the Lord?* How much better is the case when man, whose breath is in his nostrils, thus impeaches the wisdom of the All-wise, Supreme, and Eternal Lawgiver of the universe? Is it conceivable that the great God could possibly lend the sanction of his authority to that which is nothing but emptiness? or that he would command us to do that which might well be left undone? Does disobedience of any part of his law make no change in our relations to him? A mere form is an insignificant thing, and unworthy of respect. Has God commanded anything that is insignificant or unworthy of respect? Is any part of his law contemptible? The soul takes fright at the very thought. God's commandment is exceeding broad; each part of it is jealous of the honor of every other, and each is invested with the majesty of all.

A blessed thing it is to obey; but when we obey in a manner prescribed, and when we worship, and imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, doing just what he did, consecrating ourselves to God, putting on Christ before men and angels, and by the self-same act symbolize all the essential principles of the gospel, surely the act must be one which outranks in dignity any other outward act of which human beings are capable, and one on which an intelligent universe must gaze with admiration and delight. Impressed with these views of the dignity of baptism, the candid inquirer, shocked at the impiety of calling it a mere form, thus casting dishonor on the Almighty, may naturally incline to the other extreme. It need excite no surprise if one should say, "Surely the performance of such a deed will ensure the salvation of the soul; for it is not to be supposed that any of those can be lost who are admitted to such a privilege; and surely the neglect of such a solemn duty must lead to destruction; surely there can be no forgiveness for such flagrant sin."

The lover of evangelical truth needs not to be reminded that nothing that we can *do* is the ground-work of our salva-

tion. "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; . . . by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. ii. 16. All deeds of the law, that is, all acts of obedience, are here classed together, and of course baptism is included; and if the whole of them together are declared to be worthless as a ground of justification, of course any one of them must be so.

But even if the baptism prescribed *were* meritorious, and possessed of saving efficacy, it does not follow that everything that is called by the name of baptism would be of equal value. Suppose the outward act to be done; but if it is *not* done as an act of obedience; and *not* because it is a form prescribed; and *not* as an act of worship; and *not* in imitation of our Lord's example; and *not* as an act of private and personal consecration; and *not* as an act of public profession; and *not* as an act of symbolic meaning; then, indeed, it is not only a form, but a *mere* form; its spiritual character is gone; it is simply mechanical, and has no more value nor dignity than a washing of the body which might happen to one by accident. If the *word* fails to profit when not mixed with faith in them that hear it, so neither does baptism profit when not mixed with faith in them that receive it. Indeed, "*whatsoever* is not of faith is sin." Rom. xiv. 23. And surely what is done in the name of the Holy Trinity, if without faith, must be sin in most aggravated form. The baptism which is required of us involves all the religious elements heretofore described; hence a baptism, so-called, which has *none* of those elements, is clearly not the same thing; and even if there were saving power in genuine baptism, which there is not, there could be none in this. Doubtless many have been baptized with a spurious baptism, and have discovered at last that it was indeed a mere form. But it can never be too often repeated, that baptism, however genuine and proper, and however exalted in rank as a duty, is, after

all, only a duty ; and we must not make the fearful mistake of substituting corporeal washing in water for spiritual washing in the blood of the atonement.

The intelligent inquirer may still say: "I know that baptism is not our saviour; Christ is our Saviour. I know that the duty of baptism, whether discharged with faith or without faith, is like all other duties, and is neither the reason of our being saved, nor the means of our being saved, nor a certain evidence that we are or will be saved; but is not the *neglect* of it a certain evidence that we are lost, and also a good reason why we should be lost?"

In reply to this let it be said, that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound; and that there is no sin so dreadful that the blood of Christ has not power to wash it out. True, there is such a thing spoken of as an unpardonable sin, but it is not implied that this is because there is any failure in the efficacy of the atonement; and above all, there is not the least hint that this sin consists in the neglect of baptism. It is possible, indeed, that baptism, *like any other duty*, might occupy such a position in the life of an individual man, as to be *in his case* a turning-point, a test question, on the decision of which, it is to be settled whether or not he will yield unqualified obedience to God; and *in his case* neglect of this particular duty might be *an* unpardonable sin; but to say in general terms that the neglect of baptism is an unpardonable sin, is to say that which has no shadow of warrant in the New Testament. Neglect of baptism is like neglect of any other duty—sinful. But sin does not stand between God's elect and heaven. Christ has removed it; his blood has washed it into nothingness.

Again comes in the honest seeker for truth and says: "You tell me that the duty of baptism is one of vast importance, and yet that its observance will not save, nor its

neglect destroy. How can these things be reconciled? What is the exact relation of the duty to the salvation of the soul?"

The relation is the same as that of any other duty, neither less nor more. Its importance as a duty does not give it the least importance as a saviour. It holds high rank in one department, and no rank at all in the other. Duties may vary in their relative importance, but they do *not* vary in their universal want of power to save, or to do anything *toward* saving. In that respect duties are all alike.

It may throw some light on the whole subject to answer the often-asked question, "Is baptism essential?" The answer to this question will be nothing more than repetition, in different form, of what has been already said; but difference of form may be exactly what is needed.

The question as it stands is unintelligible. The word *essential* implies relationship; and relationship implies two objects of thought, for if there were only one object, relationship would be impossible; and in the question asked only one object is presented—namely, baptism; it is therefore incomplete and cannot be answered. He to whom it is addressed may well ask, Essential to *what*? If the inquiry be as to whether baptism is essential to salvation, the answer has already been given, It is *not* essential. If the inquiry be, Is baptism essential to duty? the answer has also been given, It *is* essential.

Another inquiry suggests itself, and that is, How can a thing be essential to duty and yet not essential to salvation? This question implies forgetfulness of the whole scheme of redemption. Absolute obedience in every jot and tittle is essential to duty; but if absolute obedience be essential to salvation, then none will be saved, for there is none righteous, no not one. Our only hope is that our shortcomings in regard either to baptism, or to anything else, are atoned for by

the precious blood of him who died for us, and gave himself for us, and bare our sins in his own body on the tree.

It is aside from present purposes, but it may not be amiss to say to those who speak of non-essentials, that if the word *non-essential* is not connected in their minds with some other word, their language is meaningless, and they deceive themselves by supposing that they are saying something when they are saying nothing. Non-essential to what? *That* is the question. Without an expressed or implied answer to this, the word *non-essential* conveys no idea whatever. When they speak of this or that being non-essential, do they mean non-essential to salvation? If so, let them remember that it may still be essential to *duty*. And to speak lightly of duty is to speak lightly of law, and to speak lightly of law is to speak lightly of God. Let us therefore be careful in speaking of non-essentials, lest we fall into the folly of talking about nothing, or into the sin of casting contempt on the holy law of God.

The exact relation of baptism to the salvation of our souls has now been set forth; we have seen that in *this* relation it differs from no other duty; and now, avoiding on the one hand the error of those in whose extreme view it is endowed with the miraculous power of regeneration; and on the other hand the error of those who look on it as a mere form; and avoiding, too, the strangely illogical error of those who speak of it as a trifle and yet hasten to administer it to the dying; and for ourselves regarding it simply as an important duty, but not as a saviour, nor possessed of any merit whatever,—let us examine the Scriptures, to ascertain the *degree* of importance as a duty, which is there attached to it.

1. Let us begin by saying that we are always greatly influenced by first impressions. There is a reason why this should be so. The mind is in good condition then to form clear conceptions. To that which is first there can be noth-

ing previous. Hence there are no disturbing influences, and nothing interferes with or modifies the full force of any thought that may be presented. When a public speaker rises to address an assembly, his very attitude and look, before he has said a word, will influence the minds of his hearers favorably or unfavorably. His first sentence is sure to be listened to, and on its effect, to no small extent, depends his success. The preacher begins by announcing his text. This always commands attention. The sermon is supposed to come from the text; hence, the sermon must be *in* the text. Sermon and text are in a sense the equivalents of each other; as it were the opposite sides of an equation; the text is the sermon in brief; the sermon is the text expanded.

Now what is the text of the ministry of Jesus Christ taken as a whole? What is his attitude when he is first presented to the world in his public character? What is the first impression that he makes?

Forever be it remembered that the very first recorded utterance of Jesus Christ, which by extension of meaning may be applied to us all, and which certainly applied to himself, was his testimony for baptism. Let the human race turn their eyes upon him as he introduces himself at once to his work and to the world, and they behold him in the act of baptism. This is at once his first utterance and his first attitude. "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," are the first recorded public words that fell from the lips of the Son of God. Suiting the action to the word, he yields himself to the rite, and calling upon mankind to the remotest generations, as it were with a shout that will resound to the end of time, he said "THUS"!

Here, then, is the text of the whole ministry of Jesus Christ, both spoken and acted. Here is an epitome, in word and emblem together, of all that his future ministry is to develop. He knew the power of first impressions, and selected,

as the first that he would make, that which is made by baptism. It may amaze us, but still it is true, that baptism has been selected by Infinite Wisdom as the initial of the grand and glorious work on earth of the Redeemer of mankind. Does all this seem to be too wonderful to be true? Look to the record and see if a public word was ever spoken by him prior to the word "*Thus*;" or if a public act was ever performed by him previous to baptism. Here, then, is both the title-page and the frontispiece of his ministry. There are the recorded words; there is the picture of the act. If Christ has honored baptism thus, by putting it in the foreground of his work, let those beware who speak of it as a thing of little moment.

2. First impressions are strong; perhaps last impressions are stronger. We may forget our first introduction to a friend; we are not likely to forget our last and parting interview. Especially is this the case when we know, at the time of the interview, that it is to be the last. Dying words are apt to be undying words. We cherish them with peculiar interest and with utmost tenderness; and, even if they were *not* cherished, even if we try to obliterate them, they fasten themselves upon our memory and seem to sink through our whole nature. Jesus Christ knew what was in man, and he knew the power of last impressions; and among the last words he ever uttered were these: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This was after he had risen from the dead; and it was after forty days of mysterious existence before he had ascended to his Father, between the lowly sepulchre and the heavenly throne, and in his last moment on earth, just before he was received into a cloud up into heaven out of sight. Surely the occasion was a grand one, and the words then spoken ought to have been worthy of it, and they *were*. They were words that spoke of baptism. If baptism

was the text and exordium of his ministry, so now it has become its peroration. He closed as he began. The initial foreshadowed the conclusion. The orator prepares with care his closing words; the lawyer wishing success strives to get the last word; the dying friend, knowing his words to be the last, and with eternity right before him, speaks words of tenderness and truth; and Jesus Christ, closing his ministry, and closing his personal intercourse with his people, and knowing that they would never hear his words on earth again, spoke of baptism. Let the lip quiver when it utters the word *mere*.

Is it not wonderful that the mention of baptism is both at the beginning and at the end of the ministry of Jesus Christ? Ought not these two God-spoken announcements to arrest the attention of mankind? Are they not like two sentinels, one at either end; like two great watch-towers over against each other; like two huge pillars parallel and opposite, based on earth, and reaching to heaven? Let those reject these figures who please, but the world is challenged to dispute the *facts*. Nor is it any relief to say that the facts were accidents. Accidents do not happen with God. Nor is there any relief in saying that the facts are unimportant. If the beginning and the ending of the public career of incarnate Godhead are not important, it would be in vain to search the annals of time or of eternity for that which *is* important.

3. But another view awaits us. When one person is giving directions to another in regard to a multitude of things, he mentions a few of the most prominent and important, particularly and by name; the rest he groups together, in phrases which describe them all *as a whole*, but no one of them as a unit. Especially is this the case if the directions are the last that are to be given. In such a case, to mention and make conspicuous trifling matters of detail, to the forgetfulness or neglect of the main and leading



points, would be unnatural, and, to a well-constituted mind, impossible.

Just before our Lord parted with his disciples for the last time, he held a conversation with them, in which he gave them his final directions for the great work that lay before them of evangelizing the world. All the words that he spoke, it is to be presumed, were not recorded; but we may judge of what was said by what is written. The record shows that, in speaking of various and multifarious duties, he used generic terms, saying comprehensively, and without particular description of any one thing, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." But, from out the long catalogue of the "all things" which they are commanded to teach, one thing is mentioned by name, and *only* one, and that one is baptism: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them." Why this particularity? Why was this segregated and made to stand out in bold relief, while the "all things," grouped together, formed the background? Suppose the thoughts to be presented to the mind by the act of painting rather than by words. Which would be the conspicuous figure on the canvas? Which would be the key to the picture? What means this, that baptism stands alone, and flooded with light, while the "all things" cluster together in the shade? It may not be easy to answer this last question; but, whatever the answer may be, he must be audacious indeed who supposes baptism to be anything less than a *great* commandment.

4. Let it not be supposed that imagination has outstripped the reality. Our ideals never exceed, but always fall short of, God's reals. Another fact confronts us, more astounding than any that have yet been named. There are many, many things which we are required to observe and do; but there is only one duty devolving on any member of the human race, which he is required to do "in the name of

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and that one duty is baptism. Why should the act be coupled with this dread and awful formula? What else can it be than to give it the emphasis of the Infinite? If baptism is an expression, are not the tremendous powers of eternity summoned up to infuse the energy of Godhead into it? Why is no other duty required to be done in a manner so deliberate, so solemn, and so awe-striking? By withholding the dread sanction from other duties and giving it to this, are they not relatively depressed, and is not this made to loom up as, in some respect at least, a duty without a peer? True, when the sick are anointed with oil, and the issues of life and death are at stake, it is to be done "in the name of the Lord," but not "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." There is no calling up of the three separate Persons of the Trinity; God is appealed to as God; but the three glorious Witnesses, each by name, and one by one, in mysterious unity, are not displayed as in baptism. Actions are dignified by deliberation; actions are dignified by being done in the immediate presence of God, and in the name of God. That the idea of God may fully occupy the mind, and that the thought may be detained, that his glory may spread over all, and his majesty make all sublime, he unfolds himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the ordinance of baptism. Why is it that one duty, and only one, is accompanied by these august honors and these terrible sanctions? Whatever the reason may be, the fact is undisputed and immovable. In the light of this fact, let scoffers turn white as snow!

Modern scholarship seems to have most clearly decided that the word translated *in*, in the formula of baptism, should have been translated *into*. What the words may mean, when thus translated, we cannot precisely conceive. But there is something awful about them. Baptized *into* the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! There seems to be a hidden significance in the word *into*, before which the meaning of the word *in* melts away to nothing. Is it too much to say that the name of God is God? And are we baptized into him? Are we plunged into that ocean of Eternal Being? Whether it be so or not, we are drowned in this ocean of thought. Overwhelming as these conceptions may be, and inadequate as must be our view of the truth of God, yet the *fact* stands out on record, on the living oracles of the living God, that we are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Possibly, angels may comprehend what to us is an insolvable mystery; and, if they do, must they not look on with amazement as upon one of the most wonderful phenomena of eternity when they behold a sinful man baptized into the name of God? Without pretending to explain what surpasses human powers of thought, it is enough to say that baptism would not be the only duty commanded to be done "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," if it were not a duty whose importance and whose rank should command the awe-struck reverence of all created intelligences.

5. But we have not reached the greatest wonder yet. Our nature is not poured out into words as it can be into acts; and neither our words nor acts are like those of the Almighty. In the formula of baptism we use his sacred name. True, it is by his command that we do it; still, it is *we* who do it. On one stupendous occasion the formula was not spoken, but acted; and it was God who enacted it. Once only, in the history of the world, has God in his triune character manifested himself to his creatures, and that was on the occasion of baptism. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were each separately manifested at the river Jordan. The glorious Son was baptized; the glorious Father spoke from heaven; and the

glorious Holy Spirit descended like a dove! The words of the formula were embodied into the acts of the Trinity! For ever sacred, for ever awful, for ever fearful words! Oh, sublimest drama of Earth! Never before, never since, has the world witnessed such a spectacle. Once the world was visited by more than twelve legions of angels; but these were only the messengers of the Throne, and not its Occupant. Gethsemane was a place of lonely agony. Calvary resounds with the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" But in baptism the triune God has set his earthly throne, for there only has he been manifested to the world. Perhaps the facts of that occasion are the basis of our present formula; these words are the echoes of those facts; and they may have been prescribed to keep us ever in remembrance of that moment of transcendent majesty, the conspicuous and exalted moment of all Time. But why was baptism singled out as the occasion for such amazing display? We may not be able to say, but the fact stands up as a witness with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders as God's testimony in honor of baptism.

6. It will relieve the strain upon our minds to take a view less overpowering. We judge of a man by the company he keeps. The same principle that prevails among animals of lower order seems to hold good among men,—like consorts with like. Hence to know a man's associates is in a certain sense to know him. Knowing the class to which he belongs, we know at least his rank and his general characteristics, even if we remain ignorant of his individual peculiarities. So also we judge of the opinion which a man has of anything by the classification which he awards it; or by the connection in which he speaks of it, and especially if he *always* speaks of it in that connection. Thus if one speaks of angels and archangels, cherubs and seraphs, we take it for granted that in his opinion these different orders of beings

are in some way related to each other, and that in some respects they are, if not equals, yet worthy of being named together. There may be differences among them; still, he looks at the resemblances rather than at the differences, and places them all in the same category. So, too, when in the Apocalypse mention is made of dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and liars, we suppose that however these may differ from each other, they are all measurably on the same footing, because the classification groups them all together as members of the same family. What minor differences there may be among them are ignored because of their general similarity; and we are confirmed in this view because elsewhere the same classes with others of like character are named together, and the same destiny is assigned them. In fact, every man's mind is so constituted that he cannot help being influenced in his opinion of a thing by the classification in which it is found. The principle is founded in nature; and as the Bible was inspired by the God of nature, it cannot be wrong to apply the principle to the interpretation of the book. What classification is awarded by the word of God to baptism? Let the record speak for itself: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Five things are here spoken of; believing,—not believing,—salvation,—damnation,—and baptism. The first subject named—believing—is one of infinite importance; for "without faith it is impossible to please God." The second—not believing—is the peer of the first, for the unbeliever makes God a liar, and unbelief is the seed-sin of all sins. The third—salvation—is a thing of transcendent importance, for it involves all the eternal joys that are at the right hand of God. The fourth—damnation—is fit to be mentioned in frightful antithesis to what precedes, for it involves infinite ruin in everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

These four themes, towering in gigantic importance, are fitly named together, and the fifth—baptism—is fit to be named in this colossal companionship, or it would not have been so named. It is not a case of accident, where a small thing has by inadvertence been slipped in among the great. It is by divine intention that these five things are classified together. It is the grouping of Infinite Wisdom. Nor is it conceivable that either God or men would put a trifle in connection with the most stupendous themes of eternity.

Judge of baptism by the company it keeps in the word of God, and decide whether it is a thing of small moment. There must be something in the nature of the facts which makes their association proper. God would not associate together in a kind of union things which ought not so to be associated. Hence from the very fact that they are named together, we know, not only that there is a propriety in the combination, but we also know there must be something in the nature and essence of things which is the foundation of this propriety. What this something may be, which brings close together things which in our conceptions are far apart, we do not know, and have no means of ascertaining. But our conceptions are not to be our guide. God's conceptions are eternal truth. And if in his conceptions belief and unbelief, and salvation and damnation, and baptism, are so connected as to be named conjointly, then what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

It adds force to the argument to remember what has been already said, though on a different topic, that baptism is also named in connection with "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The association is one of supremest dignity; nor is it less than sacrilege to suppose for a moment that such association would find place in the word of God, if it had not foundation in the everlasting law of right. He who scoffs at baptism, scoffs at that which keeps

glorious company. If an insult is offered to one's associates, is it not offered to him?

7. The words small and great are relative in their meaning; and things small and great are so only by comparison. The baptism of a believer is in some respects a small thing; it is a small thing when compared with the baptism of Jesus Christ. "Thus it becometh *us* to fulfill all righteousness." If there be any doubt as to whether the word *us* includes ourselves, there can be no doubt that it included him who uttered it. If he had said, "thus it becometh *me* to fulfill all righteousness," the words would have expressed real truth. From this we learn that if our Lord had not done what he did, his righteousness would not have been fulfilled; and if not fulfilled, it would have been incomplete; and if his righteousness had been incomplete, he would have been incomplete, and the world would have had no Saviour! Hence *his* baptism *was* essential,—essential to the salvation of the world! What a moment was that in the history of the universe, when on its action hung the destinies of eternity! No wonder it was honored by sublimest manifestations, and elicited expressions of divine pleasure, and displays of glory from the Throne itself. True, indeed, *every* moment of Christ's life was pregnant with eternal destiny, but this particular moment has been singled out for pre-eminent distinction, above every other moment in the earthly career of the Son of God. Perhaps it was because in that act of consecration, he took upon him the vow to do and to suffer his Father's will to the uttermost, and all his future work was constructively and concentratively present in that one germinal deed. In our own baptism, although our salvation does not depend on it, let us remember that it is the imitation and the counterpart of that on which the salvation of the world *did* depend. Let this fact invest it with profoundest solemnity and dignify it into awful majesty. And if not in the

letter, yet in spirit, Christ includes ourselves with him in the word *us*, elevating us thus to the heavenly peerage of the sons of God, let us so observe the duty as to be worthy of the glorious companionship, and let our baptismal vows be like his whose promise was equivalent to performance.

8. Another fact worthy of our most devout attention is the fact that baptism is the only duty of all the duties enjoined upon us which we are required to perform but once. This fact gives it a distinction which it enjoys all alone. The observance of the Lord's Supper may be, and ought to be, often repeated. Many other duties continuous in their nature seem to be part and parcel of our daily lives, and in their discharge we may from time to time improve. But on baptism there can be no improvement. It is the act of a moment, and when done it is done for eternity. If we are to be judged for the deeds done in the body, and if this one deed, invested with the most awful, and most glorious, and most dreadful sanctions of the Almighty, is to be done but once, and once for all, with what solemn preparation, and with what unutterable reverence should it be done! Is it not the greatest visible crisis in life? Is it not a turning-point to which we should look both forward and backward with trembling interest? May it not be the era from which some of the grandest interests of eternity are dated?

9. There is a difference between truths and facts. It is not easy to give a definition of truth, but the word fact may be more easily handled, and it is with this chiefly that we have to do. It is from the Latin word *facio*, *factum*, and means that which is *done*. Truth is not the result of action, but fact is. Truth may be spoken, truth may be believed, but it cannot be *done*. No agent is necessary to its existence. Not so with fact; for, before anything can be *done*, there must be a *doer*. Truth is eternal; facts date only from the time when they became facts; that is, from the time when



they were *done*. Truth is much more vast than fact, and oftentimes not so easily comprehended. Truth is matter of principle, which may not be clearly understood. Fact is like that which is the object of sense. Truth may often seem to evade the grasp of the wisest. Fact is within the reach of all, even the feeblest. These differences, and others that might be named, are such that the presentation of truth often fails to make as clear and as strong an impression on the mind as the presentation of fact.

Now, in what has been said of baptism, there may have been a mixture of truth and fact; but every point that has been presented as a topic is distinctly matter of fact. If, in connection with these facts, truths have been uttered, so also there may have been intermixture of error; and some of the inferences drawn from the facts may not have been drawn correctly. But in the facts themselves there can be no error; nor, I presume, will the statement of them be disputed. Let us recapitulate them. 1. It is a *fact*, that baptism was the initial of the ministry of Jesus Christ. 2. It is a *fact*, that he closed his ministry as he began it,—with baptism. 3. It is a *fact*, that the record of his last conversation on earth shows specific mention of this duty and of no other. 4. It is a *fact*, that this is the only duty which we are required to perform in the name of the Trinity. 5. It is a *fact*, that once only was Godhead displayed to earth in triune character, and that this was done on the occasion of baptism. 6. It is a *fact*, that baptism is classed in the Scriptures with things of most tremendous import and of infinite dignity. 7. It is a *fact*, that the baptism of Christ was essential to the fulfillment of all righteousness. 8. It is a *fact*, that baptism is the only duty of which one single moment in the life of an immortal being has a monopoly.

Whatever may be thought of the inferences that have been drawn, the *facts* are immovable. Statement of truth

might be disputed, for there might be difference of opinion as to what *is* truth ; but there can be no difference of opinion as to the *facts*. The facts are their own witnesses ; they speak for themselves.

In forming theories on baptism, if one disregards these facts, he is not even building a house on the sand ; he is trying to build in the air. On the other hand, a theory which is built on the facts,—on these solid rocks,—is worthy of this respect at least, that it is built on a good foundation.

Why not apply the principles of the Baconian Philosophy to the interpretation of Scripture, and take the facts as starting-points ? With these facts spread out before the eyes of mankind, it is surprising that any should think of baptism as a thing of small importance, and so signally undervalue that which God has so signally honored. It is equally astonishing that any should incline to overrate that which it would almost seem cannot be overrated. Not satisfied with the exalted rank which the facts of Scripture accord to baptism, they must even go farther, and (incredible to relate) claim for it something *more* ; they claim for it the power of regenerating the soul, which belongs only to the Holy Spirit ; or, if not so wildly extreme as this, they claim that it is the *means* by which the Holy Ghost renews the soul, thus substituting the mere water used in baptism for the truth of the word, and for the blood of the covenant.

Let us avoid both extremes ; and let us remember that the fact that baptism holds high rank as duty, gives it no rank whatever, and no *place*, as the ground-work or means of our salvation. Christ is our righteousness. His blood cleanses from all sin. Neglect of baptism must be sin ; and failure to hold it in proper esteem must be sin ; but the precious blood of the Lamb of God has power to wash away *all* sin. No sin is so great as to defy the power of the blood of the everlasting covenant. Christ is all ; Christ is enough. If

any man be in Christ, whether baptized or not, he is a new creature. If any man be not in Christ, whether baptized or not, his doom is perdition.

Let us thank God that, while our salvation is made secure by the merits and mediation of his Son, we are permitted to obey his commandments, in keeping of which there is great reward.

## SERMON XI.

### *THE JUDGMENT DAY.*

[The history of the following sermon may interest the reader. Many years ago an illiterate Negro came to the author one Sunday afternoon and begged him to "splain de Scriptur" to him. The request was somewhat vague, and rather broad; nevertheless, the New Testament was taken up, and the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew was read. In commenting on it, most of the leading thoughts in the following sermon occurred to the author for the first time. He was surprised to see so many things that he never saw before; he afterwards wrote them out; and here they are:]

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me

not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

“Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

“Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.”—MATTHEW XXV. 31-46.

The first lesson that we learn from this passage is that there is to be a Day of Judgment. There is to be an occasion, which we call a *day*, when Jesus Christ, who is here called the Son of man, will appear to make the official and final award to each member of the human race, of his everlasting destiny. He will appear “in glory,” and will be accompanied by “all the holy angels”; he will sit on a “throne,” and will exercise royal functions, and hence is called “The King.” Before him will be “gathered all nations,” that is, all people of all nations. Our first parents, who dwelt in Eden, will be there, and every one of their descendants, down to the last new-born child, who has just drawn its first breath. The King will divide them into two classes, and will announce his final decree to each.

Many years after our Lord had spoken these words, a vision of the scene described was vouchsafed to our brother, the Apostle John, whose record is but repetition, in effect, of what our Saviour had said. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in

them : and they were judged every man according to their works."—Revelation xx. 11–13.

We should not have been informed of this sublime and awful event, which is to transpire at the grand summing up for eternity of all human affairs and destinies, unless it had been intended that the knowledge of it should affect our thoughts, our feelings, our character, and our conduct. So great a thing as this must surely have been intended to be an ever present and potent factor in all our being. The man who bears it constantly in mind will be a far better man than he who forgets it. It is impossible that the consideration of such a thing should not give complexion to character. The sense of responsibility, of accountability, which it awakens ; the assurance of public approval or condemnation by the Judge of all the earth, before the assembled universe, must tend to make any man circumspect and sober. One must be more or less than human not to be profoundly affected, and that for the better, by considerations so important and so solemn. Good men anticipate the great day with awe, it is true, but not with dread. Bad men either dismiss it from their thoughts, or try to make it appear that such a day will never come. But if the very thought of it cannot be borne now, when it is at a distance, how can the thing itself be endured when it becomes real ? The spirit which now prompts to denial of the coming of that day, is but the beginning of that of which the call on the mountains and on the rocks to hide will be the close.

But we should be of all men most miserable if we knew merely the fact that there is to be such a day, without knowing the principles of adjudication on which its decisions are to be rendered. These are taught in many places in the New Testament, but nowhere more strikingly than in the passage before us. We learn much from what the King says to those before him, and we learn as much from their replies

to him; but we must be careful to take the whole colloquy together, as part of it would teach us only a part of what we ought to know; and a half-truth is sometimes as misleading as falsehood itself.

The blessed of the Father are invited to "come," that is, to join with him who speaks; and are invited to "inherit," that is, to enter into the inheritance of a "kingdom." The word *inherit* implies a right; a right not that moment established, but a right which existed before; a right which exists, not by virtue of legal decision, but in the nature of things. The "sons of God" (1 John ii. 2), the "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17), come to their possessions by natural descent. The kingdom was "prepared" by the Father for them "before the foundation of the world." Their right is very ancient, the most ancient of all rights. Precisely what is meant by the word *kingdom* we do not know; but we know that it implies supreme exaltation, and that if it was prepared by Omnipotence, in eternity, for the Son of God and his brethren, it must exceed, in grandeur and glory, all powers of human thought. Hence no description is given; and the word *kingdom* is used to stand for that which by reason of its excellence and splendor can be neither uttered nor conceived.

The ground on which the invitation is based appears now to be given. "Inherit the kingdom, *for*," that is, *because*, "I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." These expressions cannot be literally true of all to whom they are addressed, for there will be very few of them who ever saw Christ in person, or who ever had an opportunity to minister to his individual, physical wants. These must then be generic expressions, intended to stand for and represent good deeds,—good deeds of any kind. Acts of benevolence to the poor, or to those who are not poor; endeavors to sus-

tain or to spread the truth in person or by proxy; efforts to do good of any kind, must be included. He who builds or helps to build a house for the worship of God prepares a home for Jesus Christ, and thus has "taken him in;" and let this statement illustrate all that is meant.

These deeds of righteousness seem to be the basis of the invitation. But this can be only in a secondary sense; for the kingdom was prepared, and prepared for *them*, for those persons, and for *no others*, and was prepared long before these excellent deeds were done; and, in fact, before the world was made. This statement is part of what the King says, and must be taken in the connection in which he places it. The same is to be observed as to the deeds of righteousness; they too must be taken in their connections. The invitation is to *enter* into an inheritance which was theirs before, and of which the deeds were but evidences of ownership. The exhibition of a title-deed does not give a man a right to property; it merely shows the world that he *has* the right. A judge might say to a litigant, "This property is yours, *because* you have the deed," but the fact in the case would be that the litigant has the deed *because* the property is his. Further light on this point will appear as we proceed. But we must stop to consider that, whatever may be the relation of good deeds to salvation, honorable mention will be made of them by the King of kings and Lord of lords, on a grand occasion of eternity, on the grandest occasion, so far as the human race is concerned, that can ever occur. Things which seem to be very insignificant now will not be so then. So small a thing as the gift of a cup of cold water may appear in that day to be resplendent with glory.

But the sons of God and joint heirs with Christ, who are here called "the righteous," will answer and say: "Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink; or naked, and clothed thee?" These ex-



pressions, and the others of the same kind, are interrogatory in form, but categorical in fact. The case is as where a statement of fact is made by one person to another, and the latter does not remember the fact; he does not deny the statement, but asks: "When did it occur?" Thus, from the answer which the righteous give, we learn that they have no recollection of having done any of the things with which they are credited; and this shows that they never attached any importance to them from the first. A man on trial, and especially on trial for his life, never forgets the strong points in his own case; and if he knows of any fact that will make in his favor, he is sure to make it conspicuous. These had not only forgotten the facts, but were unable to recall them even when reminded of them, and not only reminded, but assured that they were true. It is manifest that at no time had they based their expectations on what they had *done*; for if they had ever thought of such a thing at all, they would be sure to think of it *then*—then when the supreme crisis had come. Yet "these all died in hope." On what did they base their hopes? The answer to this question may be found in many places in Scripture; but this passage teaches, with an emphasis, on what they did *not* base them; and this is enough to sweep the world away, and to show that their hope was built on another foundation. Here then is God's model man. He is one who leads a life of benevolence, of activity in good deeds, of consecration to the glory of his God, and to the good of his fellow-men, but who lays no stress on it, builds no hopes on it, has nothing to say about it, forgets it, but still lives and dies in hope! His song would be:

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness!  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand!

The King now turns to the left hand and says: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." It is worthy of our most earnest notice, that they are denounced not for what they had done, but for what they had *not* done. No sin of positive nature is even mentioned; the frightful indictment is a series of negations; in effect, only one sin is mentioned—the sin of *neglect*. Why should this be? Perhaps it is because our sins of omission, as they are called, outnumber immensely, and beyond all calculation, our sins of commission; perhaps it is because the one sin of neglecting the great salvation carries with it all other sins. Our convictions of sin are chiefly for what we do that is wrong. God's conviction of us is for what we have failed to do, that is right.

We notice, too, that the fire to which they are condemned was "prepared," but not for *them*. It was prepared "for the devil and his angels"; and the wicked have gone headlong, and by disobedience, have plunged themselves into a place of torment prepared not for them, but for others. It was not prepared "from the foundation of the world," an expression used to indicate eternity; but for a once glorious but now sinful being, who lost his first estate; and for those who were deluded into following him. The "kingdom" was made for the saints; but the wicked find, if they do not make, a hell for themselves; and intrude on the Evil One.

These reply to the King, and say: "Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" This answer, like the former, is interrogatory in form, but declaratory in fact. These, too, have short memories. They have forgotten

all their shortcomings. They deny the charges. The inquiry of the righteous was respectful, reverential; they only meant that they had no remembrance of anything good in them; it is as if they had replied, "Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." The reply of the wicked is impudent; it casts back the imputation in the face of him who made it, and virtually accuses him of falsehood and of injustice. These are the self-righteous ones, who see no harm in themselves, and who imagine that their good works are to be their saviours. They are elsewhere represented by our Lord, as saying: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Matt. vii. 22.

We see that, at the judgment day, human nature will be just what it is now. Those who have done the most will say the least, and those who have done the least will say the most. Those who might expect, if anybody could, to be saved by works, will be the last to speak of them or to think of them; while those who have not the least right to expect anything on this ground speak of nothing else, and think of nothing else. Both parties will be taken by surprise; some because their merits are mentioned, the others because their merits are *not* mentioned. There are those who tell us of their morals, and of their many virtues, and who say: "Aha! I am a better man than many members of your church." The insolence of such will not forsake them even when they come to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The filthy will be filthy still; and if they were admitted to the kingdom, they would have no sympathy for the saints, as they have none here, and would find no sympathy; and they would not enjoy the place, and would not stay in it; they would go of their own accord, as they are going now, to the place prepared, not for them, but for the devil and his angels—a place

for which they have fitted themselves. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. In each case the preparing is of God. Hell is a prepared place for a prepared people. The place was prepared of God for the devil and his angels; the preparing of the people for the place not prepared for them is their own.

A most remarkable peculiarity of the announcement of the King to the righteous is this: that he mentions all the good of their lives, but none of the bad. Why is this? Is it because there is no bad to mention? Yes, for that very reason. Not that they were not sinners once, but that they are not sinners *now*. Some of them have been thieves, and liars, and adulterers, and murderers. Some of them perhaps once cried: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Some of them perhaps actually took part in the murder of the Prince of life, and stained their hands with the very blood that washed away their sin. They *were* sinners, but they *are* not; they are as though they had never been sinners. Their sins are washed away. A flood, as deep as the eternal love of God, has swept them into everlasting oblivion. Their *guilt* is washed away. Their souls are cleansed from its contamination. They are purified; they are sanctified; they are as fit for nearness to the throne as Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; they are one with Christ; one with him, even as he and the Father are one. Once they needed pardon and forgiveness; but these are blessings of the past; they have something better now, they are sanctified, they are glorified. Of what use would be mention of sin? There *is* no sin.

In this life we are tormented with the memory of former sins. The transgressions of early years come crowding back upon us, hateful even to think of, trampling on our very hearts; the sins, still more inexcusable, of youth and early manhood, and of later years, crush us to the very dust; but

there is a good time coming, when we shall hear the last of it. When the Judge of all the earth has declared us "Not guilty," there will be none to cast aught in our teeth. No angel or glorified spirit would dare, or wish, to reverse God's grand decree; no evil one will have access to us; our own consciences will be purged; our consciousness will be, that we are one with Christ and the Father; all our memories will be made happy; and if we think of sin, it will only be to see that God has brought good out of it, and caused it, with all other things, to work together for good to them that love God.

It is sweet to think of heaven as a place of rest; sweet to think of it as the home of the dear spirits of loved ones gone before; as the place where we shall meet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; with all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; with the noble army of martyrs, who have died for the testimony of Jesus; but not the least of the delights of its anticipation is this, that there we shall be free from sin, free from the stain of it, free from the mention of it, free from the memory of it. Heaven indeed it would be if one could only get away from his sinful self. This is exactly what is in store for us. The King will mention all the good, but none of the bad. When God, who charges the angels with folly, has no fault to find with us, we shall find no fault with ourselves. Oh, bliss ineffable!

It is just as noticeable that, in addressing those on the left hand, the King mentions all of the bad, and none of the good. Why, why is this? Is it because there is no good to mention? None whatever. What! Will there not be in the lives of all those millions one single good deed to be named? Not one. True, many a one will be there who has been a good citizen, upright in his dealings, truthful, honest, honorable, amiable in his domestic relations, and kind to all; there may be many a lovely one there, whose walk was one

of daily beauty. Why, then, should these be numbered with the wicked, and why should not their virtuous deeds be rewarded?

No virtue is virtue in the heavenly sense, nor even in the earthly sense, when we look at it with clear eyes, unless the love of God is at the bottom of it. A heart that is in a state of estrangedness from God has something radically wrong about it; it is a *bad* heart; and a clean thing cannot come out of an unclean. There is a principle which lies back of all human motives; if that principle is the love of God, all is right; if not, all is wrong. The foundation law of all laws is that we shall love God supremely; and no motive, however excellent it may seem, which does not have its root in this, can bear acceptable fruit. There may be other motives; indeed there are; but if the tap-root does not strike down to this, there can be no enduring life. Shallow rooted virtue passes for virtue with men, but not with God. He sees that at the bottom of the character there is no regard for him. We cannot distinguish between a thing, good in itself, which comes from a heart ignorant of the love of God, and the same thing coming from a heart filled with that love. Our sight is superficial; but if we could see as God sees, we should recognize nothing as virtue which does not proceed in its earliest beginnings from loving obedience to the most holy law of God. The virtue of the amiable unbelievers is but natural virtue; it is a portion of our original nature not entirely destroyed by sin; and verily, we have reason to thank God that he has not allowed it to be entirely destroyed; for if it were, we should all torment each other like fiends, as indeed some have actually done. This natural virtue passes current, on earth, like pure gold; but in heaven it is base metal.

But even admitting that the good deeds spoken of are really virtuous in the highest sense, and this is admitted only

for the argument, the relation in which an unbeliever stands to God is such that nothing that he can do is acceptable. He is destitute of faith as well as of love. He is in a state of alienation from his Maker; the parties are at variance—not on speaking terms, as we might express it; and the offender must change his position before any service from him will be acknowledged. The unbeliever practically disputes the divine veracity; not that he has ever uttered words to that effect, but that his chronic condition is that of not taking God at his word. So long as he occupies this insulting, this hostile attitude, nothing that he can do is regarded as done in the service of God; and of course nothing can be set to his credit as service so rendered. Admitting what is not true, that the *doing* is good in itself, yet as it comes from a *doer* in the condition described, it must go for nothing.

Everything that a man does bears on it the impress of himself, as coin bears the imprimatur of the mint. If he is an unbeliever, then unbelief is inscribed on every one of his actions. Let us illustrate. A man proposes to make me a friendly offering, a most magnificent present—let us say a huge disk of pure gold, beset with gems, very splendid and immensely valuable—but on that disk he has engraved an inscription, an inscription insulting to me and defaming my character. If I take the gift, I must take the insult with it; I must, in effect, acknowledge the truth of its shameless charges, and virtually indorse its lying statements. I could never be bribed to trample on my own self-respect, and acknowledge, falsely, my own shame. Perish all the gold in the world, perish myself, before such humiliation.

The unbeliever's deeds are *not* pure gold; they are nothing but base metal, gilded; still, admit them to be pure gold, and they are offered to God. Will he accept them? There is an inscription on them, written there by the very *life* of him who makes the offering; it is in the hand-writing of his heart.

"*God is a liar*"! What else can be expected, but that the deeds and the doer will be cast into hell? "*God is a liar*"; is the expression frightful? Is the statement unfair? Nobody would ever have said it, nobody would ever have thought it, if it were not part of the imperishable record which God has given us in his word. Read this: "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth not," says Jesus Christ, "he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. No exception is made of good citizens, nor of amiable kindred, nor of kind friends. The record is quoted as it stands; and in the record before us, representing the august decisions of the last day, when all will be said that ought to be said or that *can* be said, there will be nothing said of any good deed done by unbelievers. No service can be rendered by those who are not *in* the service; and unbelievers are not in the service.

Another striking thing to be noticed is this: that the proceedings of the great day will not be on the principle of what we call book-keeping. With us, the debits are entered on one side of the ledger, and the credits on the other; a balance is struck, and the difference is set to one side or the other of the account. Not so in the judgment. The leaf containing the debits against the sons of God will be torn out and burned up, and nothing will be left but the credits; these will all stand, and besides this, there will be entered up in each one's favor, all the credits of the righteousness of Christ; a magnificent statement of accounts, truly! As to the unbelievers, there will be charged against them all the wrong they ever did; and vastly more than this, all the right they ever failed to do; and there will be nothing to their credit, for all they ever paid was in spurious coin, and worse than this, coin stamped with the imprimatur of unbelief, and making God a liar! A frightful exhibit, indeed!



In addition to many other things of great interest and value, this chapter teaches us the great love which Christ has for his people. When any kindness is shown to any one of them, he makes a personal matter of it, and declares that it is exactly the same as if the kindness had been shown to himself. "*I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was sick, and ye visited me;*" and when the date, or occasion, of all this goodness is asked for, he says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*." He makes no distinction between himself and his brethren. It is a happy thought, that he who died to save us, eighteen hundred years ago, remembers us, and loves us, and takes notice of any service rendered to us in time of need, taking it home to himself, as if rendered to him in person; and that he will not only remember, but mention it at the last day. How exalted the position of the believer, in being thus acknowledged by the Christ of God as being a part of himself, and that too even now and here, before the day of final exaltation comes!

We learn, too, that in this lower world we have some brilliant opportunities, such as heaven itself does not afford. We can minister to the personal wants of Jesus Christ. An angel once did the same thing, coming from heaven to Gethsemane to wait on the Lord Jesus. (Luke xxii. 43.) We sometimes almost envy those who lived in the time of Christ, for the pleasure and the honor which they had in personal ministrations to the Lord of life. Oh, if we could but have drawn that bucket of water at the well in Samaria! Oh, if we could but have bought *for him* that precious ointment in that alabaster box! Our tears start at the very thought of it. The very least service that we could possibly have rendered would have been remembered as the greatest epoch in life. We have the very same opportunity now. Wherever there

is a sick saint, there is a sick Saviour; wherever there is a suffering saint, there is a suffering Saviour. "*I was sick, and ye visited me.*" Stand by the bedside and look on your Lord. Bathe that aching brow, and it is as if you had bathed the pierced temples. Take the healing balm, or the cooling draught, or the nourishing viand, to your wounded, hungering, thirsting, suffering Saviour. See him shivering with cold, and supply the needed garment. "*I was naked, and ye clothed me.*" Away with those rags, and supply decency and comfort to the Lord of all the worlds. Soothe the heart of that sorrowing mourner, and be what the angel was in the garden, a minister to the Son of God. Is Christ in distress? Oh, the rapture of being able to render him succor! He is here; hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, in prison; here, impersonated in his saints; for he says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*;" and if *he* makes no difference, we should make none. Oh, glorious opportunity! Oh, blessed privilege! Oh, exalted honor! Rather this than wear a crown or rule an empire!

Really, our position and opportunities are better than those enjoyed by the personal attendants on our Lord. We have no occasion to envy them; the tide of envy should run the other way. They *saw* the gentle Saviour, they looked upon him with their eyes, and with their hands they handled of the Word of life. 1 John i. 1. They had the magnetism of his presence; they heard his loving words, and were witnesses of his mighty works. To wait on him was an easy task. We see no Saviour, no majesty, no loveliness; we see nothing but ordinary mortals like ourselves; often with nothing to admire or attract; often with much that is repulsive; often with squalor and rags and wretchedness. It is no pleasant thing to carry out the behests of charity. If Christ is there, we do not see him; we must take his word for it.

We have his word for it. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We *take* his word for it, and we take it with joy, and nothing doubting. The Marys, and Martha, and Joanna, and Salome, walked by sight; we walk by faith. What they did on the spot, we do at two thousand years distance. Because they saw, they believed; blessed are we "who have *not* seen, and yet have believed." John xx. 29. It was himself whom they served, himself visible and tangible; it is himself whom we serve, but he is invisible and intangible; what we see and handle is often loathsome to behold, and sickening to the touch. What they did without sacrifice, we are permitted to do with sacrifice—a nobler work, and one which will meet with higher reward. In some wretched hovel, there lies on a filthy couch an emaciated human horror. O Jesus, art thou here? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Let me fall to my knees, and thank God for the privilege.

Another sweet lesson is suggested by the passage before us. There is peculiar value in a *visit*. Oftentimes, what the sorrowing want is not yours, but you. They have no need of your benefactions, or if they have, this is not all their need. They want something better than any gift that can be bestowed. They want your presence, the grasp of your hand, the light of your eye, the sunbeam of your smile, the sound of your voice. A man seems to have a more comforting opinion of himself, when somebody respects him enough, and thinks enough of him, to visit him. Sympathy is sweet, and a word spoken in season, how good is it! Organized charity is necessary and good, but personal service, when possible, is better. Oftentimes, it is not charity that is needed; it is sympathy, friendship, love, cheering words of truth—heart-soothers, faith-strengtheners, hope-brighteners. It is not only

in the hovels of the poor that Christ is found. In stately chambers where wealth abounds, there may be meek and loving disciples. Their spirits are just as human as others; they need support, and encouragement, and comfort. A kindly visit, that takes a warm heart to lay alongside of a bruised one, will not be forgotten when the King shall say, "I was sick, and ye *visited* me; I was in prison, and ye *came unto* me. Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*."

The last lesson taught in this passage is that the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will last forever. Unlearned persons sometimes suppose that because the word *everlasting* is used in describing the punishment of the wicked, while the word *eternal* is applied to the reward of the righteous, there must be some difference in the duration referred to. In the original language, the same word is used in both instances; and in the Revised Version it is translated by one word in English, as it ought to have been at first. In that Version, the text is correctly rendered thus: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." But aside from this as a proof-text, what is the drift of this passage of sixteen verses, taken as a whole? Does not the whole spirit of it teach that the decrees of that day are to be final? Is there to be any higher court of appeal? Is there the least hint of a new trial? Is there to be any reversal of the words, "Come, ye blessed," or of the words, "Depart, ye cursed"? Admitting that the judgment is final, what are the facts that take place? and what are the words used? The assembled multitude is divided into two classes. Why divide them? Some are set on the right hand and some on the left. Why? Some are compared to sheep; others to animals of a wholly different nature. Why? To some the King says, "Come!" to others he says, "Depart!" Do these words mean the same thing?

Some are called "blessed"; others are called "cursed." Does this mean anything? and if so, what? Many good deeds are ascribed to some, and no bad; many bad deeds are ascribed to others, and no good. Is there any significance in this? The place to which some of them are invited and welcomed is a kingdom, prepared for *them* from the foundation of the world; others are consigned, with a curse, to fire, prepared for the enemies of God and man. Does it appear from this, that the future of the parties is to be the same? The character of the two parties is different; their relation to God is different; their history has been different; their conduct on the day of trial is different; for, while some are humble and self-abased, and astonished that anything good should be said of them, others are impudent and self-righteous to the last, and astonished that their merits are not published and applauded. If in every respect they are different up to the last supreme moment, will they not always be so? Ought not their *destinies* to be different? If the last verse, the proof-text, were wanting, the rest of the chapter would still teach its doctrine. But, says one: "The whole chapter is a mere figure of speech." The word *mere* comes in with a bad grace. It is immaterial whether the chapter be a figure of speech or not. The things which it teaches are no figure of speech. It teaches, among other things, that those who differ in their relation to God, and who have differed in their whole history, character, and conduct, up to the last day, when all human accounts shall be closed, will be different in their *destiny*, and different *forever*; and that belief and unbelief, the key-notes to moral status, will each be assigned its appropriate reward.

## SERMON XII.

### *THE CALL OF THE SPIRIT.*

“To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”—  
HEBREWS iii. 15.

I. LET us notice, in the first place, from whom it is that this language proceeds. The text occurs twice in the chapter from which it is taken, once at the seventh verse, and once at the fifteenth verse; it also occurs in the seventh verse of the next chapter; and in all three instances it is quoted from the ninety-fifth Psalm. It is represented as the language of the Almighty; and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes special pains to make this point prominent. In the first instance in which he quotes the text, he says: “Wherefore as the HOLY GHOST saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” It is perhaps the only instance in which the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament in this impressive and solemn way. So we may consider the words as having in an especial manner the awful sanction of the Holy Ghost. It is almost more than a message from God to us; it is as if the Holy Ghost himself, the third Person of the adorable Trinity, had himself in person addressed our souls. With devout spirits, full of reverence and godly fear, let us consider what the Holy Ghost saith to us: “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

II. But are these words addressed to all of us? Not necessarily. The second point then to be considered is this: To whom *is* the text addressed? It seems to be addressed to

those who are described by the expression: "If ye will hear his voice"; that is, if you intend ever to hear his voice, if you intend, or expect, or hope, at some future day, to hear his voice; that is to obey it, to accept Christ as your Saviour, and to walk in his footsteps,—you belong to the class of persons addressed. But if you have made up your mind, if you have decided finally without possibility of change, that you never will obey his voice; if you are determined to live and die in disregard of his word,—then the admonition is not addressed to you. The text will certainly bear the interpretation that I have put upon it; but if the exegesis be wrong, the words may still be used in this sense, for the thought conveyed is Scriptural. Many are the calls which the Holy Ghost makes on unconverted men. This surely must be one of them; but if not, the words are still appropriate as addressed to such. There are some whom the Holy Ghost passes by, and says of them: "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." If there be any here whom God has determined to let alone, I have nothing to say to them. Those who have determined that they never will hear his voice give the strongest possible evidence that they belong to this class; to the class of wretched people, whom God has abandoned. If there be any such persons present, I make no appeal to them. I "let them alone." I do not ask them to listen to what I say.

Probably most of those present who have not already heard the voice of the Lord and obeyed it, do really expect, at some future time, when they "get ready," or when circumstances are favorable, to listen to the claims of the gospel. Hence my discourse will be appropriate to nearly all the unconverted who hear me. Indeed, I trust that every ear will be attentive, and every heart open to the truth.

III. What is it that the text says? It warns those whom it addresses not to harden their hearts. What is meant by

hardening the heart? When the word *heart* is used in this way, it means our moral feelings; and the word *hard* used in this connection is, of course, a figure of speech. The literal sense of the word explains its figurative application. A thing is hard when it is not easily impressed. A seal or stamp may be pressed on a piece of iron or flint, and it will leave no mark; let the same seal be pressed upon a soft substance, like wax, and it leaves its mark, and the impression on the wax will correspond exactly to the seal. Now God's truth is the seal which ought to make an impression on our feelings. But I have seen persons sit under the gospel when its most awful truths were set forth, and it made no more impression on them than on the walls. I have seen the most glorious promises of the gospel proclaimed in such terms as I would suppose must thrill every heart; but there sat men and women, with immortal souls to save, as indifferent and as apathetic as the brutes that perish. There may be persons in this house who, if all the terrors of the wrath of God, and all the glories of the heaven of heavens, and all the vileness of sin, and all the beauty of holiness, and all the goodness of God, were proclaimed in such glowing eloquence that no angel could approach it, would nevertheless be utterly unconcerned, and would not remember for one hour one word they had heard. It would seem that there are some whom neither the thunders of Sinai nor the songs of the redeemed could keep awake. They have been hearing the gospel all their lives, and are now and have always been as listless as if the words had no meaning. Their hearts are hard. God be merciful to them.

There are others, probably a much larger class, who do receive some impression from the truth, and whose feelings are somewhat affected by it. But they have not received the *right* impression; and, while reception of truth makes one happy, yet a partial reception of it, or a reception mixed with error, may have the opposite effect; doubtless many a man



has received just enough of the truth to make him miserable. The heart of such a man is like wax and stone mingled together, but the stone predominates. The seal is applied and it makes an impression on the part like wax, but not on the part which is like stone. Such a man bears not the full gospel impress, but only a small part of it. There are others again whose hearts are like wax and stone mingled together, but the wax predominates. They have received much of the gospel impress, but not all. The impression is interrupted and defaced by the stony part, which received none. These, perhaps, are they who are "almost persuaded," and who miss eternal life when it is within arm's reach of them, and who fall into the bottomless pit from the very threshold of heaven.

If a man's heart is *not* hard, that is, if his feelings are in a proper state, God's word will make on him exactly the impression that it ought to make. And what is that? He will hate sin; he will be overcome with a sense of personal guilt; he will be willing to renounce sin; he will feel a crushing sense of his own unworthiness and helplessness; he will renounce self-righteousness, and hang on sovereign grace for life; he will joyfully trust and confide in Jesus Christ; he will be grateful to God; he will love God; and will love the word of God, and the ways of God, and the house of God, and the people of God; and will take delight in serving God and in keeping his commandments; and will rejoice in the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom, and will help to hasten its coming, not merely as a duty, but as a privilege; not reluctantly, but of choice, and with joy.

If a man feels as I have described, he may know that the gospel has made the right impression on him, and, if he has not already announced his feelings to the world, it is his duty to do so instantly. But if a man has never had such feelings as these, in greater or less degree, he may know that he

has not received the gospel imprint. His heart is hard, and he is still in his sins. He "is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." And "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

IV. Having shown what is meant by hardness of heart, let us now see how it is that one gets into this condition. It is done by his own act. The Holy Ghost saith, "Harden not your hearts." The verb is transitive, and imperative. You are told not to do a certain thing, and this implies that the thing, if done, is of your own doing. If your heart is hard, it is you who have made it so. Perhaps you will say that it is hard by nature. Be it so; but you have been making it harder and harder every day, and are probably doing it now. Your heart is probably in worse condition at this very moment than it ever was before; for the tendency of it is to increase in hardness. It is more probable that the gospel should have made its full and right impression on you last week than now, because now it has had one more week's hardening. Perhaps you think that there is very little probability of your being brought into the kingdom of Christ to-night; that may be so; but it would seem to be more likely to-night than it will ever be again. The present opportunity is, in the nature of things, the best you will ever have; for by to-morrow you will have had one more day's hardening; and the next day will make it still harder; and so will the next, and the next, as long as you live. A piece of clay when soft may be easily impressed; but suppose that, without making any active effort to harden it, we merely let it alone; it will of itself become harder; the quiet, but steady, operation of natural causes will be sure to do the work; in a few days it will get almost to the turning point, when impressibility ceases. One more day will finish the work. So with your heart. It has been getting harder every day for years

past; it is getting harder now; one more day may fix its state forever. Under the very appeal that I am this moment making your heart will be hardened, unless, indeed, you yield at once to gospel impressions. It is impossible that I should leave you as I found you. You will be the better or the worse for what you have heard; and the same is true of every sermon that you hear, and of every religious influence that is brought to bear upon you. It would, perhaps, be a hard thing for you to make a total surrender to Jesus Christ to-night. But it is an easier thing to do now than it will ever be again; to let the night pass without a change is to give up your best chance (if such a word as chance may be used), and your chances are growing less with every breath you draw. God be merciful to the gray-haired sinners. God be merciful to all. Even the youth in his teens may be old in sin.

I have said that the hardening of the heart is your own doing. Let us inquire how you have done it. You have done it, not with the deliberate intention of destroying your soul. I suppose no man has ever done such a thing. In the thirteenth verse of the chapter whence our text is taken, we find this expression: "Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." From this we seem to learn that, whatever the various methods of hardening the heart may be, the deceitfulness of sin lies at the bottom of them all. In each instance in which you have hardened your heart, you have been the victim of this deceitfulness. You have imagined that you could do wrong without fatal result, and perhaps without great injury, and possibly without great risk; and that if damage should accrue, you could find some way to recuperate. You have always looked to eventual escape. Do you not see that all this is a fraud? And is it not strange, that Satan can persuade men to believe that they can take fire into their bosoms and not be burned? Some of these frauds

which Satan has practiced on you, and which, having taken them at second hand from him, you have practiced on yourself, I proceed to expose.

1. I observe in the first place, that the heart is hardened by resisting good impulses. Your intention has been that this resistance should be only temporary, not that it should continue to the last ; and here is where the fraud comes in. You have perhaps felt a disposition, or a sort of half disposition at least, to yield yourself up to the claims of the gospel, and to do, and to be, all that it requires of you. If you had yielded to this impulse, all would have been well. But you resisted it. Conscience told you that you were wrong, but you stifled the voice of conscience. Perhaps after a time your feelings were again aroused by an appeal from the pulpit or from a friend. Conscience told you that you ought to surrender, but you choked it down again. Perhaps after awhile some of God's providences, the sudden death of a friend, or a narrow escape, or a dangerous illness, alarmed you ; or perhaps some touching appeal was made to you in a kind word or two, but full of meaning, from a pious father, or mother, or pastor, or friend. Conscience told you to give up, but you choked it down again,—stabbed it this time, and trampled it under foot. Now do you not see that every time conscience is choked down in this way, its power is weakened ? Every stab that you give it lets out some of its life-blood, and diminishes its energy. You well know that your conscience does not affect you so strongly to-day, as it did years ago, when you seemed to be a far better person than you are to-day. Your conscience is growing weaker, and it will continue to decline ; and will decline more rapidly as years advance. Perhaps now you can scarcely hear its voice. Towards the last it may give another whisper, and you may give it another stab—a stab to the heart this time, and it will never speak again. Many a man has reached such a condi-

tion that he has not heard his conscience whisper for years. Are you in that state? Then no appeal affects you. You see others concerned for their souls, and weeping for their sins, and they seem to you to be guilty of great folly, or of puerile or effeminate weakness. To see a man penitent or contrite either leaves you wholly indifferent, or else it disgusts you. Your heart is thoroughly hardened; you have done your work effectually.

In many cases, perhaps in most cases, you have hardened your heart when you had no intention of doing so, and when you were not aware what you were doing. Let me illustrate. When a piece of iron is heated very hot it becomes soft, and if plunged immediately into cold water, it becomes suddenly hard. So with your feelings. Sometimes they are warmed up by some sanctified and sanctifying process; and if you would keep them under that influence, it would be well. But you plunge into the cold world, immerse yourself in its business or its pleasure, withdrawing your thoughts altogether from serious things; and your feelings instantly become cold, and your heart hard. Every time you repeat this process your heart becomes harder, until finally it turns into steel. Thus even legitimate business, or legitimate pleasure, may be so engaged in as to exclude all religious thought. To refuse to yield to a religious impulse is to resist it; thus not to act is to act; and the mere putting off of religion for the sake of business, with no intention of rejecting the gospel altogether, may by degrees so harden a man's heart, as to make him wholly and forever unimpressible.

2. But I mention another way in which you harden your heart. It is by speculative inquiry. What! is religious inquiry injurious? Yes, on certain conditions, nothing can be more so. The claims of the gospel are pressed home on your conscience, and you do not discard them, nor yet do you yield to them; but by way, as you say, of acting intelligently,

you begin a course of religious inquiry, but it is not such inquiry as can do any good; it is altogether speculative. You hunt up difficult points in theology, and these are as easily found in theology as in anything else. There are some dark and deep subjects that you must have cleared up, before you can give your heart to the Lord. In short, you insist on a perfect understanding of every problem that religion involves as condition precedent to your acceptance of the gospel. Do you not perceive the fraud? Do you not see that you are deluded by the deceitfulness of sin? Do you not see that this is equivalent to indefinite postponement? Yet you busy yourself, and perhaps annoy your friends, with trying to unravel the mysteries of eternity, and make this an excuse for the neglect of present duty; and meanwhile are perhaps clamorous for practical preaching. Deceived by sin again! The real trouble is, not that the preaching is not practical, but that it *is* practical; and that is the very ground of your objection to it. "Son, give me thy heart," is the burden of our ministry. Is not that practical? Yes, and that is exactly what you are not willing to do. But you are willing to discuss the origin of evil, or any other question, when you are sure that the discussion will end in nothing. It is common to describe such a man as this by saying that he is a hard case; and such indeed he is. No scheme ever devised by Satan is more hardening to the heart, and nothing puts a man farther out of reach of all saving influences. This is the way in which intellectual men often commit soul-suicide; but it is a pity that a man should be so intellectual as to destroy his soul. It would be better to become as a little child, and accept the gospel unquestioningly. Then would real wisdom be imparted in place of that mockery of wisdom with which sin has deceived you, and with which you deceive yourself. An apostle said: "When I am weak, then am I strong"; and I

might reverse it, and say to those who consider themselves so strong, that they are weak. Do you not see the logical blunder that you make, when because you have not all knowledge, you refuse to avail yourself of any? Suppose that all men were at once to adopt the principle in worldly matters, what a stroke of paralysis it would be upon the world! All human affairs would be palsied, and death-struck. Moreover the points of theological difficulty which you raise are almost always such as lie beyond the limits of human thought. It is unphilosophic, it is absurd, to make such inquiries. To do this is no evidence of strength; it is an evidence of weakness; there is no wisdom in it; there is nothing but folly in it. To put such difficulties as these between you and salvation, is to build an impassable barrier between you and eternal life. Persist in thy course, O speculative inquirer, and thou art a lost soul!

3. But there is another way of hardening the heart, perhaps even more common. It is by speaking lightly of religion, or by purposely acting as if we thought lightly of it, or of religious people, or religious places, or services. The man who indulges in language or in conduct of this kind, will soon learn really to regard religion in the light in which he pretends he does; and when a man reaches this point his heart is perfectly callous. Without any special intention for evil, a man may show disrespect for religious places or services, and though he may say he means nothing by it, yet its influence will react on himself, and tell on him fearfully in the end; though he is deceived into thinking that he can somehow escape this terrible reaction. How completely out of the reach of the preacher is the man whose whole bearing shows disregard for the proprieties of the place, and who perhaps at the very moment of a solemn appeal is in the act of desecrating the house of God! This shameless sacrilege may be thoughtless, but it is none

the less telling. If this does not harden the heart, nothing can.

There are those who, after a meeting of unusual solemnity, will affect unusual levity. Sometimes a staid and sober middle-aged man will exhibit remarkable vivacity of manner, after some presentation of truth that made his soul tremble; and it is not uncommon to see young persons after a period of great solemnity appear more frivolous than ever. Now if this affectation of a carelessness that you do not feel is intended to conceal your real feelings, it fails of its object. I know sometimes by a man's very smile that an arrow is in his heart. The untimely smile betrays itself. If, however, you desire, by affected levity to smother your feelings, and harden your heart, you have only to persevere, and you will accomplish that object effectually.

4. But there is still another plan resorted to for hardening the heart—a half-way orthodox plan. It is by a half-way compliance with the requisitions of the gospel. A person's religious feelings are aroused; he feels that his condition is alarming; he knows that the claims of the gospel are just and righteous; he dare not reject them. So he begins to read his Bible daily; he attends church regularly; he says his prayers—I will not say that he prays—but he says his prayers; he determines to try to do better. He knows that he may do all this, and be as thoroughly unconverted as he ever was; but he satisfies himself with this. In a few days or weeks his piety slacks off, and he is just where he was before. Moreover, all the time that he was practicing these things, it was a kind of penance with him; he did not enjoy it; he did it only because he felt obliged to do it; and towards the last, he did it, not because he felt the obligation but only to carry out the resolution formed when he *did* feel it. Men often try to compromise with their consciences in this way, but secretly resolving that they will try to do



better, while at the same time there is a mental reservation, that they will not make a total surrender, and be Christians just yet.

My friends, this is a poor hiding place. Be sure your sin will find you out. So long as you continue to do this, you are hardening your heart, as rapidly, perhaps, and at any rate with as much certainty, as by anything that you can do. Perhaps if you persevere at this long enough, you will begin to plead your morality in response to the claims of the gospel; and when you reach this point, you will be at opposite poles with Jesus Christ, and with the blood of the covenant; and your case will be about as hopeless as it ever can be this side the grave. Trust in morality, is one of the most deadly heart-hardeners known to the Evil One. Morality is beautiful, but I pray you be not deceived by it.

Akin to that which I have been describing is a mere formal religion. Satan has persuaded you that you can be healthy and strong by feeding on chaff, leaving out the wheat. Remember that the religion of Jesus, the only religion that saves, is found in the experience of the heart, and not in mere forms, and outward observances. Joining the church is of no avail; baptism is of no avail; the Lord's Supper has no saving efficacy; no ceremony, and no labyrinth of ceremonies, is of the least value. Reliance on any of these things is a mere attempt at compromise; but know that the gospel makes no compromises. There is no safety for you in this refuge of externals; there is no safety *anywhere*, except in immediate, unconditional, and total surrender of the heart and life to the gospel of Christ.

5. There is another plan for hardening the heart, just the opposite of the one last named. It consists in breaking through all restraint, and plunging into open and outrageous sin. Sometimes when men are under conviction of sin, they will be more wicked than ever. A type of these is found in

the case of the boy possessed of a devil who was brought to Jesus: "And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming." And when the spirit was ordered to leave him, it seized him once more with fiendish malice, and "rent him sore, and came out of him; and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead." Mark ix. 17-29. If there be any such here, may Jesus take them by the hand, as he did the poor maniac boy, and lift them up. In dismissing the point I will only observe that plans which are the reverse of each other will have the same effect on the heart. Partial compliance with the gospel is hardening, and so also is a total disregard of it. The fraud that I perceive in this last method is the deepest of all frauds. You are deceived into believing that the gospel is all a fiction; that there is no heaven, and no hell, and perhaps no God; or that if there is, he takes no care of the morals of his universe, and holds his creatures to no account. This must be what the apostle means when he speaks, three verses above, of "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Ver. 12.

6. I must specify another plan for hardening the heart, although it is substantially involved in all that have been named. It is the only one actually implied by the very words of the text, and may be regarded as generic and as the sum total, of which the others are elements. It is procrastination. Here the deceitfulness of sin seems almost to work a miracle. It says that to-morrow will do as well, and by this a rational man allows himself to be deceived! Suppose a man to be amusing himself in a boat in the River Niagara, above the falls, and to find himself drawn a little into the rapids. Beginning to pull out, a spirit whispers to him, "Oh, you need not be in a hurry; a minute hence will do just as well." The man relaxes for a minute, when the same spirit says, "Another minute will do no harm; in no case can the delay

of only one minute be of any importance." Would any sane man be deceived by such a spirit? Yet the cataract which will launch you into the eternal world of woe is right before you, and you are in the rapids, and some spirit within you whispers, "*To-morrow*," and you listen to it! The Holy Ghost, in bursting thunder, calls out, "*To-day*! To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." You are deaf to this, but lend a willing ear to the spirit that says, "*To-morrow*!" This has been the habit of your life. I doubt not that most of the unconverted persons who hear me have really been, at some time, more or less interested in the subject of religion, and partly disposed to listen to the voice of the Lord. Yet they have taken no step in the right direction. If I were to ask them, "Have you decided to live, and are you determined to die, just as you are?" they would say "No!" But their idea is that *now* is not exactly the right time. They are listening to the voice of the deceiver, who whispers, "To-morrow! Pull out of the rapids to-morrow!" They intend to do it just as soon as they can feel that all is right. Do you not see that this is indefinite postponement, and that its end is destruction? You will never feel that all is right. And, even if you should feel so, the church at least would not be willing to receive you. The church desires those who feel that all is wrong; for they, and they only, have any right to entertain a gospel hope. You will never be better prepared to accept the gospel than you are at this moment. How can staying in the rapids help you to get out of the rapids? Oh! but you will say, "I intend to try to do better." And have you gone back to the same hiding place, out of which you were ferreted once before? Have I not shown you that trying to do better, while still holding off from the gospel of Christ, is one of the most deadly things that a sinner can do? The Holy Ghost knew all the arguments that can be used in favor

of procrastination, and in reply to all of them together he thunders out, "*To-day!*" Still the audacious spirit, with hell-born impudence, whispers, "*To-morrow!*" "I cannot," says the sinner, "I cannot take so important a step without due deliberation." The Holy Ghost replies, "*To-day!*" Yet the serpent hisses, "*To-morrow!*" And the sinner, again deceived by him, says, "I am not prepared in feeling to name the name of Jesus." The Holy Ghost answers back, "*To-day!*" "I do not understand the mysteries of the kingdom, and ought not to come until I can come more intelligently, but by *to-morrow*"—and the Holy Ghost says, "*To-day!*" "I have not sufficiently repented of my sins; let me wait until"—and the Holy Ghost cuts short the lying breath with, "*To-day!*" "I have too recently been known to the world as a sinful man; so sudden a change would not command confidence"; all which argument, in a word, is the serpent's suggestion of "*To-morrow!*" The Holy Ghost makes no parley, but says, "*To-day!*" "Then let me be prepared in my own mind, by leading for a time a life of morality." The Holy Ghost says, "*To-day!*" Forced to the last extreme, the lying reptile suggests *to-morrow* in another form, and, deceived by him, the sinner says, "Ah, I would like to come, but I am not worthy; poor sinful creature that I am, I am not fit to come." And from the very throne of God there rolls out, in thunder tones, the voice of the Holy Ghost; all the excuses and all the arguments a sinner can use are met and overwhelmed by the resistless logic of Almighty God, in that one word, "*To-day!*"

You may well exclaim, "What then shall I do?" Do? Let me say, without specifying any more of the particular ways in which deceived sinners harden their hearts, that anything that an unbeliever can do, no matter what, hardens his heart. *Doing* is itself a great heart-hardener. If the instantaneous surrender, by a hell-deserving, and helpless sinner, of

heart and life to Jesus Christ can be called doing, all is well. In this there is safety, and eternal life. Anything else than this, no matter what it is, hardens the heart, and thrusts salvation away from the soul.

Many persons, I doubt not, have hardened themselves by prayer; that is, by impenitent and unbelieving prayer. They will not submit to the gospel, yet they are uneasy for their souls, and they cherish an idea suggested by the Evil One, that if they live and die praying, the Lord will have mercy on them. Many a one who has been saying, "Lord, Lord," all his life, will be shut out of the kingdom of heaven. The man who substitutes his prayer for acceptance of the gospel makes a fatal mistake; and he who substitutes his contrition or his tears for the blood of the atonement makes a fatal mistake. The longer a man continues to weep and to pray while he yet rejects Christ, the more impenetrable his heart becomes. Whatever the unbeliever does is for his injury; there is harm for him in everything. Whatever variations of circumstance there may be, the process of heart-hardening goes steadily on.

Take a piece of clay and put it in a cold place; and it freezes, and that hardens it. Put it in a hot place; it bakes, and that hardens it. Press it; and that hardens it. Just let it alone; and that hardens it; it grows hard of itself. Whatever you do with it, or whatever you do not do, it grows harder. There is only one way to soften it; and that is to apply moisture to it, and to do it *in time*. Delay too long, and the clay assumes a new character which nothing can soften.

Ah! these are clay hearts of ours! How dreadful is the condition of the unconverted man! If he prays, rejecting Christ in his heart, that is for the worse; and if he does not pray, that is for the worse; if he trusts to morality, that is for the worse; and if he is immoral, that is for the worse; and

whatever he does, and whatever he does not do, *all* is for the worse. Let him take what step he will, or let him take no step at all, he makes his heart harder, and darkens his prospect of salvation by every breath he draws.

"Why then," you will say, "there is no hope!" That is precisely the point that I wish to establish; there is no hope in unbelief. One thing will soften your heart, no matter how hard it is; and that is the blood of the Redeemer. Put your trust in Jesus Christ, and all will be well. "Him that cometh to me," says he, "I will in no wise cast out"; and you need not fear that you will be an exception to that all-embracing declaration.

I have shown you now *from* whom the words of the text proceed. "To-day," the *Holy Ghost* saith, "harden not your hearts." I have shown *to* whom the words are addressed, and many of you well know that they are addressed to *you*. I have shown what is meant by hardening the heart. I have shown that this is the result of your own doing, and that God holds you responsible for it. I have shown some of the various ways in which this is done, all of which involve the deceitfulness of sin, and all of which involve procrastination. I have shown the reasons by which these things are sustained, all of which are answered by the Holy Ghost in one succinct, but tremendous argument, embodied in that one, settling word, "*To-day!*"

V. Let us now look at the results of this heart-hardening, and wicked life. The results are shown in the verse next following the text, which reads as follows: "Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest."

1. The first result that we notice is, that it brings the Almighty to his oath. "Unto whom *I* swear." It is a solemn thing to bring a *man* to his oath. An awful responsibility is incurred when a man says, "I swear," although his breath is in his nostrils, and he is but a worm of the dust,

But when the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who is the God of the whole heaven, and of the whole earth, who inhabits eternity, and fills immensity with his presence, when he says, "*I swear!*" the whole universe should stand awe-struck. On no light occasion should a *man* take an oath, though men often do take oaths when they ought not. But God never takes an oath on an occasion that is unworthy of it. Here then is an occasion which is worthy the oath of the eternal God. A great occasion truly; solemn, and awful, beyond our conceptions! These trifling things that we do, some of them half-consciously, and some of them unconsciously, and all of them in the line of procrastination, are not so trifling as they seem. We may think but little of them; but God thinks enough of them to take his oath on them. We may make excuses for them, and try to explain them away; but God takes no excuses, nor explanations, and *swears!* His oath is addressed to the guilty; mark the words, *unto whom!* "Unto whom I swear"! Oh! is it possible that God thus speaks to me! Am *I* the object towards which the artillery of God's tremendous oath is leveled? All you who have hardened your hearts, to you is the oath of an angry God addressed.

2. Let us notice that the inevitable result of this heart-hardening is to bring God to his *wrath*. "Unto whom I swear in my *wrath*." God tells you on his oath that all this dallying with duty, this putting off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day, stirs up his wrath. At the very moment that you are now told of it, you may be trying to invent some new excuse for continued delay, and this only stirs up more wrath. Terrified you may be at the awful prospect, and you shudder to think of the future; but yet you hold back from Christ, and this excites more wrath. This wrath may not burst upon you now, for God's providence seems to have dammed up the river of his wrath. But the

time will come when providence will cease to intervene, the hour of death will come, and then accumulated vengeance, long withheld, will rush out like a fiery flood, scorching, blasting, overwhelming, with destruction, infinite and forever.

3. This leads me to notice the doom of the heart-hardeners. The words of the Spirit are: "They shall not enter into my rest." There will be no rest for you; and as to this, you have God's oath for it. "Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."<sup>1</sup> An immortal conscience will forever torment an immortal soul. The Devil and his angels will be the companions of the forever restless, but immortal soul. The wrath of God will burn forever against an immortal soul. It matters not in what way he will manifest his fiery indignation. The wrath of God, in *any* of its manifestations, overpowers, a thousand times over, all mortal conception.

But is there no way to appease the wrath of God? In the world to come, none whatever. If there were, there would at last be rest. But the oath of Almighty God declares that there shall be no rest! What! shall I not after a time sufficiently expiate the sins of this short life? The Holy Ghost answers: "*No rest!*" But is this reasonable? I have no reply to make to this, but the Holy Ghost says: "*No rest!*" But how is this consistent with the mercy of God? I have no explanations to make. The Holy Ghost says: "*No rest!*" But what is the philosophy of all this? Now is no time to talk about philosophy. The wrath of God is kindled, and will burn forever, for the Holy

<sup>1</sup> These words as at first used had reference to rest in the land of Canaan, but as used in the Epistle to the Hebrews, reference is evidently had to the *heavenly* Canaan. When the apostle says: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (ch. iv. v. 9), and "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest" (v. 11), there can be no possible doubt as to his meaning.



Ghost says: "*No rest!*" "But if I cease to delay, if I am ready now, this instant for a full surrender to Christ, is there no way to quench this wrath?" Yes! yes! The blood of the atonement will quench it. The blood of Jesus Christ will extinguish the last spark of it. Baptize yourself in that blood, and that moment your soul will be as safe as the eternal love, and almighty power of God can make it. Come then to Jesus; and from that moment you will be dead to the world, and your life will be hid with Christ in God.

But reject Jesus, reject him once more, and you may put yourself beyond the reach of the Spirit's call; among those who have procrastinated for the last time, and who have decided finally against the salvation of their own souls. The interests of eternity may turn on the decision of this moment. May God help you to decide aright.

There is a time, we know not when,  
A point, we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men,  
To glory or despair !

## SERMON XIII.

### THE SONS OF GOD.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—1 JOHN iii. 2.

WAIVING preface, we come straight to the text, and consider its several expressions, one by one, in the order in which they occur.

“Beloved.” This is the vocative word by which the apostle addresses his audience. Who are they to whom he speaks? They are the people of God, the believers in our Lord Jesus Christ; not those of any particular church, nor of any age or nation, but to the saints of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and of all ages, to the end of time. Are there any of the Lord’s elect within these walls? To *you*, the apostle speaks. It is as if the favorite disciple of Jesus stood before you in person, and looking on you with benignant eyes, addressed you by this endearing epithet as his *beloved*. He who loved Jesus, and whom Jesus loved, rises from the bosom of his Lord, and looking over the vast congregation of the saints that shall stand upon the earth, whom no man can number, ourselves included among them, if indeed we be saints, salutes them as *beloved*. What kind of love can that be which the apostle feels for millions, most of whom he had not seen, and indeed most of them unborn, and the vast majority of them even yet to be born? Love has various phases. There is that love which we have for our fathers; and, differing somewhat from this, is the love which we have for our mothers; and again, different is that

which we have for our brothers; and still different is the love for our sisters, and for our friends, and for our countrymen, and for men *as men*—as the children of our common Father in heaven. Each relationship gives rise to an affection of its own, each differing from all others in kind, and often differing in degree. Among the various forms in which affection manifests itself, is the love which one disciple of the Lord Jesus bears to another. Springing from a relationship peculiarly its own, Christian love differs from all other loves. It is only less wide in its scope than philanthropy, which includes in its embrace the whole family of man. Yet the strength and tenderness of its tie is not weakened by its vast extension. Let strangers meet, and if each sees in the other the image of the Lord Jesus, there is love at first sight. How often when two parties are thrown together, there seems to be, on slight acquaintance, no sympathy between them; but let one of them drop a word which indicates his sonship with Christ, and instantly the feeling of brothership is established; and though there be no outward act, and perhaps no word of recognition, the two fall, as it were, into each other's arms; they understand each other, they love each other, they trust each other; they feel that, as to the great interests of eternity, their hearts beat together. Differences of race or nation do not destroy the tie; little differences of creed do not destroy the tie; *great* differences of creed do not destroy the tie; *nothing* destroys the tie. A story is told, whether true or false is immaterial, for in either case the point is illustrated, of two strangers who met, having never met before. Neither could speak one word of the language of the other, yet there seemed to be a mysterious sympathy between them. One of them, in his anxiety to communicate, exclaimed, "*Halleluiah*"! The other promptly responded, "*Amen*"! Then they knew that they were brothers. One word from the vocabulary of grace awakens an affection, not so strong, perhaps, as some

earthly loves, but more enduring than them all; and it may be, in our immortal career, more ardent than them all. In this love, there is a kind of sympathy and a depth of sympathy, which that of no other love can approach. The believer and the unbeliever, yoked together as husband and wife, may entertain a genuine affection for each other, which will last for life; but the deepest current of their feelings, which will last forever, must run in opposite directions. Let some terrific emergency arise which strains every sinew of men's souls, and the saints look not to their earthly relationships for sympathy, but to each other. The man of God, if flames were crackling around him, would look, not to some godless kindred that might be standing nigh, but to the disciple of Jesus, should there be one there; and even if that disciple were a servant of servants, low born and dusky-skinned, would say to him, "Brother beloved, pray for me!" At the last day, when the great Shepherd shall divide the sheep from the goats, the saints by mutual attraction will come together, while they and the wicked by mutual repulsion will separate. The beginnings of that deathless love of God's people for each other which will possess their souls in the eternal world are formed here on the earth. If the true disciple has to choose for the profoundest sympathies of his soul, between the sceptered but godless monarch who sits on imperial throne, and the beggar whose sores the dogs lick at his gate, but whose heart is the home of grace, he would exclaim, "Give me the beggar!" The man of intellect, and learning, and taste, and polish, himself a saint, may have a kind of sympathy with his godless peer, but it is superficial; it is pleasant enough in the hey-day of life; but he has a deeper sympathy with a brother in the Lord, even if the latter be coarse, and ignorant, and vulgar, and physically repulsive. When we come to extremities, when we reach the bottom of the soul's deepest experiences, shall we choose between in-

tellect and grace? between worldly elegance and the image of Christ? Let a prince in society and in the world of taste and letters represent the one, and an untutored clown the other, and the Christian's heart exclaims, "Give me the clown!" The saint himself may be a prince, the peer of all princes; he may be all that genius, and opportunity, and culture can make him; and may enjoy the shallow pleasures of companionship with his equals in position; but ask him whom he *loves*, and he will tell you that he loves the *brethren*: let them be rich or poor, high or low, white or black, when he sees the image of the Lord in their hearts, he yearns for them, and seeks their association, and exclaims:

Hinder me not, ye much loved saints,  
For I must go with you.

And to *all* the Israel of God he says: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth i. 16. Let me rather suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for all time. Let the reproach of Christ be in higher esteem than all riches. In the day of sunshine and prosperity, the polished children of the world may be my play-fellows, rather my play-*things*; but in my calamity my heart yearns for the brethren, nor can my heart ever grow cool. O Israel, O Zion, when I cease to love thee, let my right hand forget her cunning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!

Men of the world who may be present have no appreciation of what I have said. They understand the meaning of the words, but not the nature of the sentiment. As men born blind cannot see, so men not born of the Spirit have no conception of the experiences of grace. Be it known to you, then, that here is a phenomenon worthy of your attention. There is such a thing as Christian love. Its tie is one of the

tenderest and one of the strongest known to the Christian heart; its current is the deepest, and its tide is ceaseless as eternity. The fact should engage your attention, and lead you to seek the religion from which it proceeds. In obedience to its impulse, the Apostle John, who leaned on Jesus' breast, stands before you to-day, and gently says, "Beloved!"

Having considered the manner of our brother John's address, let us now regard its substance. First of all, he says, "Now are we the sons of God." Of whom does he speak? He speaks of those to whom he spoke, not of the world, but of the *beloved*, of the saints, the believers in Jesus, God's elect; and of these he declares that they are the sons of God. In a certain sense all men are the sons of God; that is, they are his by creation; but the saints are his by a second creation; and this second creation is more than a creation; it is a begetting. They have been born again; born from above, born of the Spirit. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18; we are "new creatures," 2 Cor. v. 17; "created in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. We "were dead in trespasses and in sins," and "he quickened" us into life, Eph. ii. 1, by the same power which created us at first. Nothing short of omnipotence could have brought us into either natural life or spiritual life. Birth is a thing with which he who is born has nothing to do; hence, if we stand on a higher plane than unregenerate men, we have no ground for boasting. For who is it that has made us to differ? Not we ourselves; no man can beget himself. God has begotten us, and to him be all the glory. For ourselves there is nothing but humiliation; for it was not our merit, but our demerit, that occasioned this new relationship; it was our depraved nature that made this regeneration either necessary or possible. The change from nature to grace has a dark side, a black side,—the side toward us; it has a bright

side, resplendent with the glory of infinite mercy,—the side toward God. He saw us in our lost condition ; knowing that there could be no salvation for us without a new nature, he looked on us with pitying eyes, and, summoning up the power by which the world was made, he gave us that new nature. Now, that new nature is ours, ours by inheritance ; we are his sons, begotten in his image. Nor can we ever cease to be his sons. He has not given us this new life to take it away from us ; he has given it to us to keep. It is a deathless life ; the germ of immortality is in it. God will not suffer his sons, rescued from perdition for the sake of their elder brother, his Son Jesus Christ, to be put to death by any ; nor will he permit those whom he regenerated in compliance with the terms of the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son to fall into the pit. Sons of God in perdition ! Is the thought conceivable ? They are not only sons ; they are heirs. Heirs of God in perdition ! No language can express the horror which the thought excites. They are joint heirs with Christ. Joint heirs with Christ in perdition ! We shudder away with curdling blood from the very words ! No ! They are sons with the Son, and heirs with the Heir ; their inheritance is co-extensive with his inheritance, and united with his, so that if they lose theirs, he must lose his ; the security of his title is the security of theirs. His throne is forever and ever ; and on his throne with him will they sit. Rev. iii. 21. How far exalted above principalities and powers is the position of those whom God has begotten with the word of truth, who are the brethren of Christ ! Each one of them is a crown-prince of God. Angels fell ; they were not united to the throne ; but when we fall, who are united to Christ, the throne itself will fall. The wonder of the worlds, and of the world to come, are they whom God took from the miry clay and from an horrible pit, and made them by a new creation his sons, and brothers of that glorious

Person, by whom the worlds were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made.

Observe, too, that the apostle speaks in the present tense. He says, "Beloved, now *are* we the sons of God." In our thoughtlessness, we are apt to feel as if our sonship will not be complete until we die, and enter the pearly gates, and mingle with the angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect. As well might we say that one cannot be the son of another until he becomes a grown man. He is his father's son from the beginning. The relationship of father and son is as complete at the first moment as it ever is afterwards. Knowing this, the apostle does not use the future tense; he does not say that we *shall be* the sons of God, but in holy exultation, he says, "Beloved, now *are* we the sons of God." The expression would have been complete, if he had said, "We are the sons of God," for the tense of the verb fastens the fact to the present time; but to make it more emphatic, he brings in an adverb, to strengthen the force of the verb; "Beloved! *now* are we the sons of God." Is it possible that heirs of an eternal throne are walking about the earth to-day? Let the apostle answer for himself, "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God." Do you ask, dear saint, "Is that glorious inheritance to be mine, in the better world?" It is yours *now*! "Is Christ who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high to be my *brother*—*my* brother?" He is your brother *now*! "Is my relationship to God and to Christ to be such as no angel can aspire to?" It is such *now*! Neither life nor death, nor time nor eternity, can alter or modify the fact that the saints are *now* the sons of God, with all the immortal rights and privileges which that relationship involves.

The heir to a throne should deport himself with becoming dignity. Let us remember the high vocation wherewith we are called, and walk worthy of it. Let us spend not a



moment in a manner unbecoming to those who are now the sons of God. Let the example of our brother, our elder brother, once on earth but now on high, be for our imitation. Let us be as tender and as true, as gentle and as loving, as self-sacrificing and as consecrated, as devout and as pure, as faithful and as brave, as Jesus Christ: then shall we be fit to be called, what in fact we are, the sons of God.

Our brother John proceeds to say: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is as if he had said, "It is true that we are sons, but we are not full grown sons. We are in the infancy of spiritual life, and it does not now appear into what our manhood will develop." He does not speak of the objective glories of the future world, and say: "It doth not yet appear what we shall *see*"; he speaks rather of our subjective state, and says: "It doth not yet appear what we shall *be*"; having regard, not to the heaven around us, but to the heaven in us. Our condition then, as now, will depend more on *what* we are than on *where* we are. If it were possible to describe all the splendors of the heavenly city, it might be done without giving us the least conception of the true glory of the place, unless we were informed at the same time as to what we shall be. On the same line another apostle speaks of the "Glory that shall be revealed *in us*" Rom. viii. 18. Doubtless glory inconceivable to us, in our present state, will be revealed *to us*; but there will also be a glory revealed *in us*, which may be as great a wonder to heaven, as heaven will be to us. Each saint that enters the holy place will carry with him his own experiences of grace, and his own story of divine love, showing its adaptedness to his idiosyncracies; and in each will be a distinct revelation of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Among the countless millions that will compose the throng of the redeemed, no two will be alike, but all together will be a constellation, a galaxy, of glorious revelations, such as heaven never saw

before. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It may be that we shall be as unlike our present selves as the majestic oak of centuries is unlike the acorn from which it sprang, or as the gold-bespangled butterfly is unlike its parent worm. Development there will be; there is a future for us; this much is implied by the text: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"; but what that future will be was not made known even to the seer of Patmos. There are grand secrets in heaven, which were kept even from the beloved disciple, but which will yet be made known to us all. Whether we shall be like flaming cherubs or blazing seraphs, or like something which we have neither words to describe nor powers to conceive, the apostle did not know; nor has there been further revelation since his day; and now, as then, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

But having referred to what he does *not* know, the apostle proceeds to speak of what he *does* know. He says next, "But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." In this expression two propositions are involved: 1. That "he will appear." 2. That, when he does appear, "we shall be like him."

Of whom does the apostle speak when he says, "When *he* shall appear"? It may be that reference is had to the second coming of our Lord, and this seems to be the general opinion of scholarly men, and certainly the general tenor of the Epistle appears to favor this view; or it may be that the apostle refers to those glorious disclosures of himself which God will make to his elect, when he fulfills the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The grammatical construction would seem to confirm this latter view, and to this I incline. It matters but little which of these views may be the proper one. In either case, it is manifest that there is to be an appearing—an appearing of divine glory such as no mortal eye has ever yet beheld.

There is to be a great unfolding of the splendors of the divine character and nature; and we shall be there to see; and we shall have capacity of appreciation given to us. Moses once said to the Lord, "I beseech thee show me thy glory," and the Lord condescended to cause his goodness to pass before the prophet; but he hid him in the cleft of the rock, lest the sight should overpower him; for he said, "No man can see my face and live." But there is a day coming when the hiding place in the cleft of the rock will not be needed; when God, either in the person of his Son, or in his own eternal glory, will exhibit, if not the inmost, yet the inner depths of his fathomless excellence, to the raptured spirits of his sons, redeemed by the blood of the covenant, and begotten by the word of his truth.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be, nor is it possible for us to know what revelation of himself God will make; yet this we *do* know, that, when that time comes, "we shall be like him." This is enough to know. The sons of God now show but little resemblance to their Father; in some of them the likeness can scarcely be discovered; but there is a future coming when the children will be like their Father, feature for feature, lineament for lineament; the resemblance will be manifest, and all heaven will see it. The babe in embryo can scarcely be expected to look like its father; but, when manhood arrives, it will be palpable that the father has reproduced himself. The sons of God now, even the most perfectly developed of them, are but babes in embryo; but in the maturity of the heavenly state they will carry the evidences of their sonship in their persons, and will command from all created intelligences the homage which is due to the sons of God. The principle in nature, that like begets like, has not been varied from in the begetting of the children of God. When he shall appear, they will be like him; like him who is the impersonation of infinite excel-

lence ; before whom angels bow, and veil their faces, and cry forever, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" Oh ! the future of the sons of God ! People think of it as a future of peace, and joy, and of sweet companionship, and of delightful surroundings ; they think of the heaven that is outside. But oh ! the heaven that is inside ; the heaven of being like God ! In this vale of tears, in this world of sin, it is not what we see, nor what we suffer, that distresses us ; it is what we *are*. One's self is his own greatest torment. To be sinful ; to be depraved ; to be unworthy ; to be vile,—leads many a one to exclaim, with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and to say, "I discover in myself more resemblance to the father of lies than to the Father in heaven ; which way I fly is sin ; myself *am* sin !" The day of deliverance is coming, when we shall not be what we now are ; when we shall get away from ourselves ; when we shall find nothing in ourselves to grieve over ; when these internal fires will be quenched. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." The greatest surprise of heaven will be the surprise at one's self. Like God ! Am I like God ? Is this myself ? Is this the identical self which I knew myself to be when I was a poor, sinful creature on the earth ? This pure spirit, this sinless soul, these glorious powers—are they mine ? Lord, is it I ? Consciousness of the fact would extinguish life, if it were not that God has provided for the emergency, and will not only give us the glory, but the power to bear it. This is the heaven of our highest aspirations,—a heaven never thought of in the wildest flight that human imagination ever took,—a heaven-inspired heaven. But is it true ? The voice of him who leaned on Jesus' breast comes rolling back over the centuries, "When he shall appear we shall be like him" ! Enough ! Given this, and all the rest is of small moment.

Identity preserved, conscious identity, and personal excellence in such form and degree that we shall be like God, involves enough to satisfy greater longings than human nature ever had or ever dreamed of until God inspired new longings, and enough to satisfy the longings thus inspired. We cannot realize the truth ; our capacities fall short of it ; still it is well to know it, and to remember that the apostle, in stating the fact, prefaced it with the words, "*We know*" !

Having declared that we shall be like God, our brother John now proceeds to state a reason *why* we shall be like him. It may indeed be said that we shall be like him under the laws of generation : and certainly this is true, and is implied in that "of his own will begat he us" ; but means will be used to intensify the likeness thus engendered. God will so reveal himself to us, that "we shall see him as he is" ; and this is the reason, introduced by the word *for*, which the apostle gives for the similarity declared. "We shall be like him, *for* we shall see him as he is." The principle involved is one with which we are familiar. The mind becomes what it contemplates. He who regards little things will become little ; his mind will shrink to the dimensions of the objects it holds in view. He who regards great things will become great ; his mind will expand in proportion to the demand made upon it. He who regards vile things will become vile, as he who swallows poison will be poisoned. He who regards pure things will become pure, as he who partakes of wholesome food will derive health and vigor from it. Familiarity with vice tends to debauch the purest mind, and nothing but the strongest antidotes can prevent this result. Intimate association with the good will elevate the most degraded. Savage surroundings will make a man a savage ; he will deteriorate from civilization to barbarism. On the other hand, let all the appointments of taste and culture be about one, let all that he sees and all that he hears be refined and

delicate, and unless the better elements of his nature are utterly destroyed, he will gradually rise to great superiority to his former self. If one has enjoyed such influences from the beginning of his life, he will be sure to reflect, to some extent at least, the elegance of his encompassments. It is on this principle, that not merely to gratify our tastes, but also for the sake of our families, we decorate our homes, and array our gardens in their robes of beauty. And with still nobler aims, in rearing our children, we never forget that evil communications are sure to corrupt good manners. The demoralizing influence of impure literature is universally recognized; and we try to keep our children from sights and sounds, such as would awaken in their young minds improper thoughts, or excite wrong desires. We try to keep them pure, by shutting out from their minds all that is low or vulgar, or degrading, and by introducing them constantly to all that is lovely and of good report. In all this we recognize the principle that the mind becomes what it contemplates.

Now then, if that which is elevated is elevating, what can so grandly ennoble a man as perpetual contemplation of God? If that which is pure is purifying, what can lead to such perfect purity as a vision of the depths of the purity of the divine bosom? Now, we see God but dimly; but even with our very partial and very imperfect views, those whose thoughts run out towards him are the noblemen of the earth. But in that day, when he shall appear, when we shall see him who is now invisible, when we shall see him not as we imagine him to be, but when "*we shall see him as he is,*" the principle that the mind becomes what it contemplates will still hold good; and seeing his greatness, his goodness, his wisdom, his purity, his truth, his love, his mercy, his infinite and awful holiness, there will be indefinite expansion of mind, indefinite enlargement of soul, inconceivable refinement of feeling, immeasurable exaltation in dignity, and rapturous

consciousness that we ourselves, our very selves, are indeed the sons of God. Being made by the new birth "partakers of the divine nature," that glorious nature being ours by natural inheritance, and afterwards being permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies, and to "see him as he is," what else is possible than that we should "be like him?"

The process of assimilation may never be complete, for the more we see of him, the more we shall be like him, and we shall see more and more of him forever; and thus we shall go on from strength to strength, and develop from glory to glory. But though the process may never end even in the eternal world, the beginning of it is in this present life. It is our knowledge of him that now makes us what we are, so far as there is anything good in us. His truth is himself expressed, and in studying this, we are studying him. "Sanctify them through thy truth," says our Saviour, "thy word is truth." Men sometimes clamor for what they call practical preaching, as opposed to that which is doctrinal. They know not what they ask. The doctrine of God is God, and what can be more practical than to fill our minds with him? Will any one say that God is unpractical? He who made us, and who knows what is best for us, has graciously revealed himself to some extent, and also some of his plans, and purposes, and principles of procedure. Has he not revealed the proper things? If he has, then these are the things for us to study; and the more we ponder them, the more we shall be assimilated to his image from whom they proceed. Is not this practical? The man who gives himself to earth and earthly things will find in an eternal world, and often in this world, that he has been the most unpractical, the most visionary, the wildest, the most deluded, of all intelligent creatures.

If we would be worthy sons of God, let us banish from our perceptions, and from our thoughts, all that is unlike

God ; let us welcome to our consideration all that pertains to him ; let us feed upon his word, and make it our daily meditation ; let us cultivate habitual devoutness ; let us remember, too, that obedience is one of the best of assimilators, for “ if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine ” (John vii. 17) ; and to do his will is to be what he would have us be. If when we see him as he is, we shall be like him for that reason, then the more nearly we now see him as he is, the more like him now we shall become ; and the best view point from which we can regard him is the post of duty. Let us stand fast by this, at personal sacrifice if need be ; and direct our thoughts daily and hourly to him ; and the likeness to our Father will be plainly visible—

Before we reach the heavenly hills,  
Or walk the golden streets,—

and the heaven of what we shall be will be begun on earth.

To repeat the text is to recapitulate the meditations of the morning :

Beloved !  
Now are we the sons of God ;  
And it doth not yet appear what we shall be :  
But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him,  
For we shall see him as he is !

What a cluster of precious thoughts we find in these few words ! The text reminds us of the grapes of Eschol, one bunch of which was so large that a man could not carry it, and it was hung on a pole which rested on the shoulders of two men, who conveyed it between them. Surely the fruits on which we have feasted this morning are from the garden of the Lord. Their rich and nourishing juices have refreshed and invigorated us. Yet the supply is undiminished ; others are growing where these grew ; we have had but a cluster, from a vineyard with no bounds, which is full of them.



## SERMON XIV.

### *THE WICKED BLEST FOR THE RIGHTEOUS' SAKE.*

“Lo ! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”—Acts xxvii. 24.

THE wicked are often blest for the righteous' sake. The principle on which this is done, and justified, is unknown to man. Reason and philosophy neither suggest nor recognize it. Nor indeed is it revealed in the Bible. The fact is there clearly set forth, but the justification of it, the principle by virtue of which the fact is allowed to exist, God has hidden from us. Even if it were revealed, it is probable that it would be too deep for us to understand, and we should be no wiser than we are now. As to the fact and the principle both, they have no analogies in anything human. Perhaps the nearest approach to an analogy is this: A father whose daughter is married to an unworthy husband conveys property to the daughter, and thus indirectly benefits the son-in-law. Here the wicked is blest for the righteous' sake ; yet the cases are not parallel ; for here the intention is to benefit only the daughter ; the benefit which accrues to the son-in-law being incidental, and perhaps regretted by the donor, who would prevent it if he could. In such cases we generally see that the donor uses every means in his power to prevent the unworthy from being partaker of his bounty ; and indeed this feeling so far prevails, that sometimes a father withholds his gifts from his daughter whom he loves, rather than have them shared by her unworthy consort. But with God, both parties are blest by intention, and not by

accident. It is the fact that both parties are blest—blest of God—and God never does anything without intending to do it. As his actions never fall short of his ideals, neither do they ever outstrip them. There are no laws outside of himself, under the control of which any of his doings must come. We may cast a stone to wound an enemy, and thereby, perhaps, smite a friend. After the stone has left our hand, it is subject to gravitation and other laws, which we cannot control. We, in defending our country, might protect some whom we might wish to have fallen victims to the common foe. We do this from the necessity of the case. But God is under no such necessity. If he allows the tares and the wheat to grow together until the harvest, it is because he chooses to do so, and not because he lacks either the wisdom or the power to separate them. If he causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and the rain to fall alike on the just and the unjust, it is not because he is forced to do so by any power outside of himself; it is simply because he so wills.

As before remarked, we are utterly ignorant of the principle on which God blesses the wicked for the righteous' sake. We can only say that his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. But this principle, whatever it may be, is the fundamental one in the plan of salvation. To it all the saints of God owe their redemption. For the sake of "Jesus Christ the righteous," ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of guilty rebels against God will be forgiven, justified, sanctified, and eternally glorified. "Not by works of righteousness" which they have done, "but according to his mercy" he saves them, "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed" on them "abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour," Titus iii. 5; "who suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter iii. 18. Guilty sinners as they are, God forgets their sins, and imputes to

them the righteousness of Christ; and in an eternal world, they will forever say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." *Psa. cxv. 1.* Why God has chosen to exhibit his mercy in this way, it is not for us to inquire. Suffice it for us to say with the Psalmist, "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." *Psa. cxv. 3.*

Nothing is more familiar to all than the truth that we wicked creatures are blest for the sake of Jesus Christ, our righteous Saviour. Every prayer which closes, as most prayers do, with the words, "*for Christ's sake*," or with other words of like meaning, at once acknowledges and proclaims the doctrine. We are apt, however, to suppose that this principle is found only in the plan of salvation, or in things connected with it. Our text, however, and many other passages of Scripture, expressly teach that this principle is not thus isolated, but that it appears in many other of the dealings of God with men. It is interesting to observe the same features of the divine economy in the dispensations of providence, which characterize the Dispensation of Grace; for we are thus happily confirmed in the belief that he who is the God of nature and of providence, is also the God of the Bible and of our salvation. Let us look to the inspired record, and notice some of the instances there mentioned in which the Almighty has blest bad men for the sake of good ones.

In the first place, we have our text, "Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Paul, it will be remembered, was on shipboard on the Mediterranean Sea, traveling to Rome to be tried before Cesar, on his appeal from the court held by Festus and Agrippa. He was placed as a prisoner in charge of a centurion, who, with a guard of soldiers, was conveying him to his place of destination. The whole number of persons on board the ship, including soldiers,

seamen, officers, and prisoners, was two hundred and seventy-six. There is no reason to suppose that any of them except Paul were righteous men, and it is nearly certain that all of them were idolaters. The vessel on which they all embarked was about to be wrecked, with the almost certain prospect of destruction to the entire crew. God, however, had a great work for Paul to do, and he determined to deliver his servant from the power of the elements. Thus far there is nothing wonderful. But the record assures us that all that motley crew of wicked men, who composed the ship's company, were saved from impending death, by God himself, from *regard to Paul*. The angel of the Lord appeared before the latter, and said, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Mark the expression, "God hath given thee." It was not an accident; it was by appointment of God. "Hath given thee." It was a gift to Paul in person, of the lives of those who were with him. Those idolatrous and wicked men were spared, vouchsafed the boon of life, for Paul's sake. Here, then, is a clear instance outside of the plan of salvation, where blessings, not spiritual indeed, but still blessings, were conferred on the wicked for the sake of the righteous.

Turning to the Old Testament, we find another instance in the case of the dishonest and idolatrous Laban, who was blest for the sake of Jacob, who sojourned with him. After having served Laban for several years, Jacob proposed to leave him. Laban's answer to this proposal is thus set forth in the sacred record: "And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry, for I have learned by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." The blessings referred to were the blessings of providence, increase of cattle, and of other worldly possessions.

Another instance, even more striking, perhaps, is found in

the case of Potiphar, the Egyptian officer, who was blest on Joseph's account, Joseph being a member of his household, in the capacity of principal servant. The inspired record reads as follows: "And it came to pass from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house, for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, in the house, and in the field." Gen. xxxix. 5.

Another instance, again, equally clear, but perhaps not so striking, is seen in the case of Zoar, the city which was saved from destruction on Lot's account. God was about to overthrow the cities of the plain, and actually did destroy Sodom and Gomorrha with fire and brimstone. Zoar would have been involved in the same ruin, but Lot, who had been urged by the angel to flee to the mountains, replied that he could not escape to the mountains, and asked if he might not take refuge in Zoar, arguing that as it was but a little city, it might be spared. Whether the argument from the diminutiveness of the city had weight or not, the logic of Lot's presence had power in heaven, and the city was spared for his sake. In reply to his request, the angel of the Lord said to him, "See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city, for the which thou hast spoken." Gen. xix. 21.

The fact that in all these cases the blessings bestowed were of temporal nature is all the more to our purpose, for it shows that the principle pervades the acts of God's providence, as well as those of his grace; the analogies of nature thus showing unity of purpose with the scheme of redemption.

Besides the examples already referred to, many passages of Scripture may be brought forward which distinctly avow the same plan of divine procedure. For example, in the fifth chapter of Jeremiah, we find the following: "Run ye

to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon *it*." Here it seems to be declared that the sins of the whole city would have been pardoned for the sake of one righteous man, if there had been one such man in it. Again, in the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel, we have the following: "And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none." Here it is clearly taught, that if there had been a righteous man in the land, the whole land would have been blest for his sake. Perhaps the most noted passage is that which was read at the opening of these services, when the Lord said: "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare all the place for their sakes." Gen. xviii. 26. He afterwards said: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." Perhaps, if Abraham had continued asking, God would have spared it altogether for Abraham's own sake. For it is to be observed that God never ceased giving, until Abraham ceased asking; and that Abraham ceased asking, not because God's goodness failed, but because his faith failed. However this may be, the fact that God is willing to bless the wicked for the righteous' sake, is clearly set forth in this passage.

One other passage only will be referred to. In the fifth chapter of the prophet Micah it is said that, "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."—What is elsewhere stated literally is here expressed in poetic figure. As a dew from the Lord, which falls impartially upon fruit and flower, prolific grain and noxious weed; or as the showers of rain, which descend alike on fields fertile and sterile, so the blessing

of God poured out upon Israel would fall upon the nations among whom Israel dwelt; the Lord, for the sake of his chosen ones, blessing also those whose good fortune brought them into their companionship.

To all that has been said there seems to be one serious objection. It is repeatedly declared in Scripture that God will reward every man according to his works. How is this to be reconciled with the doctrine advanced, that he deals with the wicked, not according to their doings, but shows mercy to them from his regard to others?

It may be remarked, in the first place, that, with regard to temporal blessings, God does not deal with men according to their deeds; for if he did, no man would ever be blest; and, indeed, the whole race would long since have been swept into perdition. The wicked often enjoy great prosperity in worldly matters. "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." Oftentimes there are "no bands" even "in their death." *Psa. lxxiii.* While the righteous, in the midst of his many afflictions, will sometimes say with the poet Asaph, "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and have washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." *Psa. lxxiii.* The doctrine of this discourse does not conflict with God's dealing with every man according to his deeds, so far as temporal blessings are concerned; for these are not bestowed on that principle, as both experience and Scripture abundantly declare. In fact, all the temporal blessings that ever have been enjoyed on earth since the fall of man have been bestowed on our wicked race for the righteous' sake,—even for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. The blessings of providence to the race are just as much the purchase of the atonement as the blessings of grace to the elect. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and all the daily blessings of life, are ours only for Jesus' sake; and

in this sense salvation is universal. The apparently opposing principles do not conflict as to things temporal; the only difficulty, if there be any, is with regard to things spiritual. How can the blessings of the hereafter be apportioned to each man according to his merits, as the Scripture declares in many places, while yet the wicked are to be saved for the righteous' sake—for Jesus' sake?

Those who are saved will be saved, not on the ground of their merit, but with regard solely to the merits of Jesus Christ, for whose sake, and for whose sake *alone*, they will be rescued from the perdition to which their deeds would have justly consigned them. When they *are* saved, they will be rewarded for their deeds. Their evil deeds will be remembered no more, for it is from these—from their sins—that they are saved. But their good deeds will be published, and rewarded; he who did nothing more than give a cup of cold water to a disciple will in no wise lose his reward. When the dead who die in the Lord rest from their labors, their works do follow them. They follow them for a purpose. What can that purpose be? It must be to bless and to glorify; and the longer and brighter the train by which they are followed, the greater will be their bliss and their exaltation; while those who are saved so as by fire, whose works are all burned up, must be but door-keepers in the house of the Lord,—infinitely blest, it is true, but not blest as they would have been, if followed by a shining array of Christ-like deeds. Thus the stars that shine forever and ever will differ one from another in glory. And thus God will proceed on both principles; first saving the elect through Jesus Christ; that is, blessing the wicked for the righteous' sake; and afterwards, rewarding them for their deeds, not forgetting so small a thing as a cup of cold water.

With regard to those who perish, they will be dealt with on the same principles. The blessings of life, and health,



and prosperity, and all manner of worldly good, together with the present gracious opportunities of hearing the gospel, and embracing it; all these things they have received on the principle of blessing the wicked for the righteous' sake. But having rejected the salvation which Jesus brought, they will be judged according to their deeds, some being beaten with many stripes, and some with comparatively few.

Thus it appears, that what seemed to be conflicting principles do not really impinge on each other; but operate independently, and in such different directions that there is no interference. But whether we can explain the apparent contradiction or not is a small matter. If we believe nothing but what we can explain, our creed will be brief. There can be no doubt of the fact that God does bless the wicked for the sake of the righteous; the thought runs all through the Bible; and the principle pervades all God's dealings with men for time and for eternity. He who, in the plenitude of his grace, saves a world full of sinners for Jesus' sake, saves also, by the workings of his providence, a ship's company of idolaters for Paul's sake. "Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

Considering it then established, that God blesses the wicked for the righteous' sake, not only in the plan of salvation, but also, which is more especially the subject of our present notice, in the ordinary affairs of life; let us inquire what practical use can be made of the subject. Some one may ask, "What of it, if it is so? If the doctrine is true, it must have its uses. What are those uses"?

In the first place, we are led to a new view of the goodness of God. He dispenses his blessings on such grounds as the best of men, in their utmost benevolence, never dreamed of. If I may use a strong anthropomorphism, it seems to represent God as being anxious to be gracious, and as seeking excuses for the manifestation of his mercy. When the

wicked will give him no opportunities to bless them for their own sakes, an ingeniously found opportunity is discovered in the goodness of their neighbors, and they are blest for *their* sake. As a determined man when he cannot find a way will make one, so the determined impulses to goodness of the Ever-blessed One will make ways for its manifestation, and force itself through channels, natural or unnatural, blessing the righteous, not only for their deeds, but with a surplus, which inures to the benefit of the wicked. Surely this is a most amiable light in which to view the character of the Almighty; and surely we ought to love and glorify a Being whose goodness is so winning, whose benevolence is so resplendent.

Another use of the doctrine is this: It supplies another inducement to abound in goodness. While the love of God should be the mainspring of all our actions, it is not unscriptural that, superadded to this, should be the love of man. Let benevolence prompt you to a holy life, that the blessing which God pours out on the righteous may run over for the injurious. Thus you will not only be blest, but be a blessing. "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" How do you know, O father, and O mother, but that if you keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them, the mercy of the Lord may be from everlasting to everlasting to you, and his righteousness to your children's children? Serve the Lord, and the blessing he bestows upon you may descend to your offspring. You may draw down blessings upon all your kindred, upon your neighbors, upon your friends, upon your country. Let all who love their fellow-men do deeds of righteousness, and the windows of heaven which will be opened above them, will shower down blessings not only upon, but all around them.

Another use of the doctrine is this: It teaches us to seek the company of the good. It is well known that they who

are found in bad company are apt to suffer, as indeed they ought; for the penalty should follow the fault. Thank God, that, while we can see no reason for it, it is nevertheless the fact, that those who are found in good company are sure to share their blessings, even if unworthy of them. Let us, then, press close to the holy and the good, so that, when their cup runneth over, and the blessing comes in such floods that there shall not be room to receive it, we may be there to partake of the overflowing bounty. Let us walk through life, hand in hand with the pious, and the consecrated, linking our destiny with theirs, and saying, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Perhaps by continued association with them we shall be so imbued with their spirit that, when they ascend, their mantles will fall upon us. If Elisha had not kept company with Elijah, he would not have witnessed the glorious spectacle of his ascension, and would not have been blest with the glorious inheritance. The prophet, about to be translated, seemed to put obstacles in the way of his companion. Elijah said to Elisha, "Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Discouragement again assailed the persistent prophet, for Elijah said to him, "Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho." Nothing daunted, Elisha again replied, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee!" For the third time there came determined repulse, for Elijah said, "Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan." The still more determined reply was as before, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." They passed over the bed of Jordan together, and Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." And he

said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me, when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." And as they went on and talked there came a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha *saw* it! he *saw* it! he *saw* it! Oh! let not the man of God put me away from him. Despite remonstrance, I will cling to him. I will follow him to Bethel, to Jericho, to Jordan, to the ends of the earth, that, when his chariot comes, I may be there to seize the falling mantle. How vain are the thoughts of those who would serve God, but who keep themselves separate from his people! Let me never be banished from such association. All unworthy as I know I am, my song shall ever be—

Hinder me not, ye much loved saints,  
For I must go with you.

I may be shut out, and justly, from the fellowship of the Lord's people, but nothing can keep me from their company. In ancient days, some who were afar off said to Israel, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." A wise resolve it was; and the day will never dawn when it will not be a blessed thing to be where blessed people are.

Still another use of the doctrine. It shows us who are our true benefactors, and our indebtedness to them. We generally look to our great men as our country's benefactors; but we ought to look to our *good* men. All honor to the brave, who with strong arm and dauntless heart defends his country in battle; but more honor to him because of whose goodness the God of battles causes victory to perch upon our banners. All honor to the statesman, whose wise counsels sustain us in our place among the nations; more honor to him who practices the righteousness which alone exalteth a nation. In another world when we look back upon, and understand, all the secret and mysterious influences that are at work around

us here, we may discover that some humble and obscure citizen, whose name figures on no historic page, whose modest course was all unobserved, whose meek and quiet spirit shrank from notice, has done more for his country and for the world, than all our generals, statesmen, orators, philosophers, scholars, and scientists together.

We know not how great a blessing may come from God for what may seem to us to be an insignificant cause. In some great city, where wickedness is rife and rampant, where a million human beings are congregated, and where crime seems to be concentrated in a focal point, there—in some far-off little chamber, perhaps in dusty garret, cheerless of fire, and where the blasts of winter peal through broken panes—there sits a lone widow, who plies her industrious needle for the pittance wherewith to buy bread for the half-famished boy who calls her mother. Tears fall from weakened eyes on aching fingers, but her trust is in him who is a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. God looks down from heaven, and is moved with pity. Yearning with compassion, his love gushes out toward the poor and the needy, and the river of goodness overflows the whole city. Who knows but that the great awakenings, and the great outpourings sometimes experienced in this place or in that may have been for the sake of some righteous soul, who so provoked the goodness of God, that it burst out over the whole place? If it were so, it would but be in keeping with that economy, by virtue of which it was said to Paul, “Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”

Those wicked soldiers who sailed with Paul, and who were saved on his account, were anxious to put him to death, lest he might escape. There seem to be some like them now who, at least, thrust the righteous aside and treat them with contumely. Let us remember our obligations to the righteous, and cherish the good wherever we find them. Let us

not ask whether men are wise, or great, or rich, or learned, or high, or low in estate ; let us seek the good ; and having found them, even if they be poor, and ignorant, and despised, and immeasurably beneath us in social position, let us cherish them, and honor them, and love them. Thus, with the lowly, we may find honor to ourselves ; and while we discharge a debt of gratitude to these, our true benefactors, and God's noblemen, we shall receive new blessing from the God whom they serve.

Another use of the doctrine is that it shows at once the greatness, and appropriateness, of the gift of God to his people. "Lo, God hath *given* thee all them that sail with thee." What a splendid donation ! Not houses, nor lands, nor money, nor men-servants, nor maid-servants, but the lives of two hundred and seventy-five of his fellow-men ; and with their lives, the opportunity to secure eternal life. Perhaps some of them seized the opportunity, and shine now as gems in the apostle's crown of rejoicing. When princes make presents, it is expected that the recipients will be made rich. Here is a gift from the King of kings, worthy of the donor. Imagine yourself to be spectator of a shipwreck, such as Paul suffered, or such as are frequent on our Atlantic waters. Suppose when the *Austria*<sup>1</sup> was destroyed, with hundreds of human beings on board, you could have seen the frantic terror of some who threw themselves into the waves, the silent and despairing agony of others who inactively resigned themselves to their fate, the frenzied energy of others clinging to treacherous planks, the sea all alive with struggling mortals ; and suppose that just then, some angel had said to you : "I come to offer you a choice of gifts. Take for your portion uncounted gold, or take the lives of that perishing multitude." Oh ! who could have hesitated which to choose ? Once an angel came to a similar scene,

<sup>1</sup> This was a recent event when this sermon was delivered in 1858.

and said to one: "Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." What wealth bestowed! what glorious opulence! what munificence of infinite goodness!

But the appropriateness of such a gift to one of God's children is more striking than its magnitude. God knows that if he were to bestow on one of his chosen ones every good thing that could possibly inure to his benefit, irrespective of others, he would still be not fully blest. If all one's blessings terminate subjectively, his selfish affections only would be gratified; but these are the weakest desires of a Christian's heart. Love is his strongest impulse, and, if this be ungratified, he can have no appetite for selfish pleasures. God blesses him in all respects. He gives him all the good he can hold in his own soul; and, besides this, all he can enjoy by proxy. As we, in bestowing gifts, seek out what is appropriate, and what is best adapted to gratify the peculiar tastes of the intended recipient, so God, who knows the idiosyncracies of his people, bestows gifts that terminate not on themselves, but such as gratify their benevolent affections. He who is able to give like a God, knows what to give to the children of God.

Perhaps this view may throw a ray of light on that text where our Saviour in his last prayer says, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." A part of Christ's glory is that of being the righteous one for whose sake others are saved. A glory, like in kind, was vouchsafed to Paul, for whose righteous sake all his fellow-travelers were spared. A glory, like in kind, is vouchsafed to every righteous man; for whoever is blest himself is himself a blessing.

One more thought will close this discourse. We have seen that wicked men are blest for the righteous' sake, and that, too, when there is no relationship or tie between them, and when they happen by accident to travel or sojourn together. Let it be remembered, too, that those whom we call

righteous are righteous only by imperfect human standards, and that they fall infinitely short of the glory of God. How much more shall the wicked be blest for the righteous' sake, when that righteous one is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person! How much more when there is more than mere companionship, when indeed there is the union of mutual love! How much more when this union is not transient, but forever and ever! How much more when it is not accidental, but by the eternal purpose of God! Oh! if the doctrine we have been considering be true, how infinitely blest, how eternally safe, how far beyond the reach of Arminian cavil or Satanic malice is the disciple of Jesus! Oh, in my journey through life, may I ever find some Paul, to be my fellow-traveler, for whose sake I may be blest, and to whom in the hour of peril my poor life may be given! But in my eternal pilgrimage, O Lord Jesus, be thou the companion, and the lover of my soul; then indeed shall the wicked be blest for the righteous' sake! Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Saviour, more than life to me,  
I am clinging, clinging close to thee;  
Let thy precious blood applied,  
Keep me ever, ever near thy side.  
Every day, every hour,  
Let me feel thy cleansing power;  
May thy tender love to me,  
Bind me closer, closer, Lord, to thee.



## SERMON XV.

### *ANALYSIS OF NEARNESS TO GOD.*

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”—JAMES iv. 8.

THE Scriptures are full of sweet and precious promises. Inspired men who have gone before us have scattered them all along the Christian pilgrim's pathway, like flowers to cheer by their glowing colors, or refresh by their sweet perfume; or, to change the figure, they are like trees planted all along the King's highway, so that all who travel there may rest under their cooling shade, or partake of their luscious fruit. Perhaps there is no promise more refreshing and invigorating to the Christian, than that now before us. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” This is one of those promises that are inviting to sinners unconverted, as well as to saints. Many, alas! are not on the King's highway, but tread the broad road that leads to destruction. Yet even to them, the voice of inspiration calls, sweetly and invitingly, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”

Here is a certain blessing promised, to wit, that God will draw nigh to us, on a certain condition to be performed, to wit, that we draw nigh to him. It is desirable that we should know exactly what this blessing is; and also exactly what the condition is on which we are to obtain it. We derive enjoyment from the promise just as it stands, without explanation, and perhaps without a distinct apprehension of its meaning. There is something sweet in the very sound of the words. A charm seems to linger around them, a melody

to be breathed in them. We recognize in them the Fatherly voice, and we know by the tone that good is intended. But if there be music in the mere sound which embodies the thought, how much will our joy be enhanced when we come to appreciate the thought itself! The condition and the promise are therefore worthy of our closest scrutiny.

I. Let us inquire what is meant by drawing nigh to God. If we regard God as in heaven, and ourselves on earth, we cannot draw nigher to him than we are now. If we regard him as an Omnipresent Spirit, nearness is equal at all times. But it is not a question of space. What then is it? If one portion of Scripture be dark, light is thrown upon it from some other passage, which light it modifies and reflects; like a body, opaque in itself, which borrows rays, softens, and reproduces them. Our Saviour, quoting from Isaiah, says on a certain occasion: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." Matt. xv. 8.

It is easy to infer from this passage, what is meant by drawing nigh to God with the lips. It is to speak forth his honor and his praise; to admit, orally, the truth of his word; to acknowledge our dependence on him, and his claims upon us; and to ask his favor and his blessing. But this is not drawing near to God in reality, because it is a mere lip-service, unaccompanied by the sentiment of the soul and the desires of the heart. Suppose the heart and lips to be united in such a service. Our Lord declares that the worshipers *did* draw nigh to him with the lips; if the same had been done with the heart, the service would have been complete, and the condition prefixed to the reward promised would have been complied with. This is only another form of saying that drawing nigh to God consists in the spirit of heartfelt prayer, a spirit which may exist not only in the act of prayer but which may be habitual and

abiding. A careful analysis, therefore, of the share which the heart takes in prayer, will show exactly what is meant by drawing nigh to God. In making this analysis, it will be well, as we consider each element of duty, to regard, also, its reasonableness, and the obligation we are under to discharge it.

1. Let us notice that the very act of prayer implies a desire to have an interview with God. This is an indispensable preliminary to drawing nigh to God. Ought not one to entertain this desire? Here is a Being possessed of every perfection of character. Ought not every rational and moral creature to desire acquaintance and intercourse and intimacy with him? Here is a friend who has been supporting you all your life. Ought you not to wish to speak to him, and thank him for his countless benefactions? This perfect and most gracious Being you have offended and injured. Ought you not to desire opportunity to prostrate yourself before him, and crave forgiveness? He has threatened with everlasting destruction those who refuse to seek him. Ought you not to plead for mercy? He has provided a plan whereby you may be saved, saved from sin and its consequences, to holiness and all that it involves. Ought you not to desire from him a revelation of that plan? He has provided a Mediator, through whom you may approach him. Ought you not to avail yourself of that mediation? Surely, considering your circumstances and your relation to God, it is highly desirable that you should have an interview with him. There is nothing to be gained by staying away, but all to be lost. The question of interview is only a question of time. You must meet him at the last day, when, if you have not made peace with him before, his face will be clothed with frowns. It would be better to seek his face now, while he smiles. The man who has no desire to avail himself thus of his privileges, is far from God indeed. There

exists, in this case, a mutual repulsion between the Creator and the creature, which will widen the distance between them forever. But he who has this desire for personal appearance before a personal God, has taken the first step towards drawing nigh to him.

2. When this desire to speak with God has truly possessed a man's soul, he is sure, in yielding to it, to utter, as he approaches the Majesty on high, some expressions of adoration; that is, he worships God, by ascribing glory and honor to him.

"Thou, O God, art greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about thee! Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come! O Lord our God, thou art very great. Thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment, and yet as to us makest darkness thy pavilion. As heaven is high above the earth, so are thy thoughts above our thoughts, and thy ways above our ways. All nations before thee are as a drop in the bucket, or as the small dust of the balance. Thou takest up the isles as a very little thing. They are as nothing, and counted to thee as less than nothing, and vanity. Glory, and honor, and praise, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne forever and ever. The Lord is king. The Lord, he is God, and beside him there is none else."

These words, or others of like character, constitute an essential part of oral worship. The man who feels the sentiments which such words express, is doing that much towards drawing near to God. Ought not every heart to entertain such sentiments as these? God is an Eternal Spirit; we are creatures of yesterday. Ought we not to revere him? God made the world and the sky, and all that in them is; we are helpless worms. Ought we not to adore the Source of all power? God is omniscient; we are ignorant. Ought we not

to do homage to Infinite Wisdom? God is glorious, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Ought we not, if we dared to do it, to render awe-struck praise to Infinite Purity? The entertaining of these sentiments, so reasonable, and so proper, is another step towards drawing nigh to God.

3. But further, the man who draws nigh to God with his lips confesses himself to be a sinner, a great sinner; for any sin is great. Ought he not to draw nigh with his heart in the same way? That is, ought not a man to *feel* that he is a great sinner? Just think of a pure and holy God, in whose sight the very heavens are unclean, and then think of yourself! God has been holy from eternity; did you ever spend one day as you ought? or one hour? or a moment? The purest thought you ever had, was it entirely uncontaminated? The best act of worship you ever did, was it worthy? When we approach the presence of him who is to be our righteous Judge, whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity, and who will visit awful and tremendous justice on transgressors, is it not becoming that we should be oppressed with a sense of our own depraved nature, and, all prostrate in spirit, exclaim: "Unclean! unclean!" The man whose breast is not filled with this emotion, never yet drew nigh to God. What shall we say of those who claim the right to nigh approach, on the ground of their excellent character? An impassable gulf lies between them and their Maker. But blessed is the man who is burdened with a sense of guilt; for "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm xxxiv. 18.

4. But this is not all. The man who draws nigh to God with his lips professes such awful reverence for the Majesty of Heaven, and such abhorrence of himself as a vile sinner, that he claims the intervention of a Mediator. Now the man who draws nigh with the heart does really feel the need of a

Mediator. Ought he not thus to feel? God is great; we are miserable criminals who have violated his law. God is a consuming fire; how can we come into his presence? If there were no Mediator, we should be in the situation of the devils. How could they presume to show their faces before God? Nor is there anything in our nature to make us at all more fit than they to come into the angust presence of the Almighty. Remember now that there is a Mediator between God and men; that this Mediator is a person of high standing with the King, so high that he shares his throne; that nevertheless there is a human side to his nature, and that he calls us *brethren*; that for the sake of exercising the mediatorial office, he assumed the nature and form of man; and was crucified, in order to make an atonement for our sins; and that this atonement was appointed by the Almighty, before the foundation of the world, as a means whereby we might draw nigh to him, and as a satisfactory expiation of our sin, and that God has pledged himself to this: that he will in no wise cast out any who come to him by Jesus Christ.

Now when our natural state and relation to God are so awful, and when we really need a Mediator so much, and when such an all-sufficient one is to be had, ought we not to *feel* as if we needed him? and really to lean upon him, trusting wholly to what he can do for us, and not to what we can do for ourselves? What feeling could be more reasonable or becoming than this? What feeling would seem to be more natural? What could be more unnatural, what so audacious, as to ignore mediation, to thrust aside the Mediator, and to press toward the awful Presence on our own account? My friend! Do you feel this need of a Mediator between you and the great God? It will not suffice that your understanding assents to the desirableness of such mediation. Your heart must be stirred with emotion in view of your need of some one who is in the divine favor, to say a

good word for you before the high court of heaven. Would it fill you with rapture to think that you have an advocate with the Father, that this advocate loves you, and that the Father loves him, and will do anything for him that he asks, even to the extent of his kingdom? Does your soul yearn for such a friend in heaven, and would you be overjoyed to think that you had one? If so, happy is it for you; for you are not far from God. This step has brought you very nigh. But without this you are forever banished; for, says Jesus Christ, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John xiv. 6.) We "who were sometimes afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13), and by no other means; if this be omitted, nearness is not possible. Except through Jesus Christ, God is unapproachable.

5. But let us take another onward step, and press as closely to God as possible. The man who draws nigh with his lips, professes faith in God's word, and confidence in his promises. If a man exercises this faith, if he *feels* this confidence, all is well, and his service is acceptable. Ought not a man to feel this assurance of faith in him with whom deceit is impossible? He who dwelleth in light unapproachable, whose word is eternal truth,—shall he not be believed? God has declared by the mouth of one of his spokesmen to the world, that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." Gal. iii. 13. Glorious news! Ought we to feel confidence in it? By the mouth of another he has assured us, that Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. ii. 24. Wonderful, indeed, it is, that our sins should be borne by another! But ought the wonder to shake our confidence? By another he has said, that "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 7. Mystery! We cannot understand how it is, that an unholy being can be made holy by blood, nor how he can be made holy at all. But shall its mysteriousness be a ground of mis-

giving? Shall we believe God only when he tells us things that excite no wonder, that is, things of which we have other evidence, and which we believe on account of that other evidence? Is God's word to be taken only when it is indorsed? Must circumstances corroborate his statements before we receive them? The Maker of heaven and earth, he that sitteth King forever and ever, sends us word that we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son," and "shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10. It may seem too good to be true, that the pure and holy God and vile sinners should ever be reconciled and in harmony. But God himself is responsible for the announcement. Shall we impeach the witness? We are assured, on the same authority, that Christ is "able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. Where is the man that dares to make exceptions, when God makes none? Ought we, or ought we not, to take the Almighty at his word, and rely without question or doubt, on his declarations, with more confidence even than we feel in the testimony of our senses? Our senses sometimes deceive us; in fact, not very unfrequently. Yet we rely on them; and when we are sure, we are *very* sure. Did God ever deceive? Is he capable of deceit? Is not his word the surest reliance in the universe? Think of him whose wisdom made the worlds, and whose power sustains them, whose infinite and awful holiness is from everlasting to everlasting, whose goodness is unfathomable as eternity, and all of whose glorious character is pledged for the truth of his word; then with your mind filled with this conception of the majesty of Jehovah, tell me what your imagination can suggest superior to him, or what evidence, which more than his declaration, should command our confidence. Ought we not with the calm assurance, and with the solemn, yet glad emphasis of the Psalmist, to exclaim: "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven!" Ps. cxix. 89.



Strange that men should doubt! What a world's phenomenon is an unbeliever! Yet, alas! human nature is so perverted by sin, that unbelief, which would seem to be monstrous, is normal. It is the abnormal that has become normal. He who has so far got the better of human depravity as to feel confidence in the promises of the gospel; who enjoys a happy assurance that they are true; who, without the shadow of a misgiving, risks his soul's salvation on them,—is a man over whom angels exult with shouts of rejoicing. Happy man! None that are afar off can exercise such faith, nor enjoy the peace that passeth understanding, which it brings.

6. Another step will bring us not only nigh to God, but into his very embrace. The man who draws nigh with his lips professes to dedicate himself to God's service, and to be, and to do, all that his law requires. This is drawing nigh, *very* nigh, with the lips, and if the sincere desire of the heart accompany these oral utterances, the worshiper is nigh indeed. Ought not a man to be willing to obey one who is infinitely great, and wise, and just, and good? It is certain that God will require from him nothing but what is right. Ought one to be willing to do right? God will require nothing from a man but what is for his own good. Ought a man to be willing to benefit himself? The Lord Almighty has been our constant Benefactor, and we have never served him as we should. Ought we to be willing to serve him now? God is the Saviour of our souls. Suppose that he requires our fortunes, our lives, all that we have. Ought we not to respond to the demand cheerfully? We ought not to wait to be asked; we ought to forestall demand by offer. Without looking for a command, we ought rather to seek a privilege. The question should never be: What *must* I do? but, What *may* I do? Without yielding reluctantly, as if to rigid and inexorable exaction, we should of our own accord fly to our Divine Saviour, and say:

“Here am I, O Saviour, and here is mine. Take all, all, all!”

My brother, my friend, are you willing to give up every sin, to do every duty, to consecrate yourself, your heart, your life, your time, your talents, your earthly possessions, your all to the service of your Maker? Or must you make some reservations? Are there some things too good to give to God? Are there some services too great to be rendered to him? We must be ready to forsake houses and lands, and father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and children, and all that we have, and all that we love, for him. He who stands ready thus to disencumber himself, is already disencumbered; and having thus laid aside every weight, it is easy for his freed spirit to soar up to heavenly regions, and be above the world while he is in it, and be close to the Eternal Spirit, while he is yet in the flesh.

It is needless to particularize further, for under the points that have been made, every needful element may be grouped. A sincere desire to seek the Lord; emotions of reverence and awe for the Majesty on high, and the embodiment of all perfection; a sense of self-abasedness; a consciousness of the need of the Great Mediator; a serene confidence in God's promises; a willingness to lay ourselves and our all upon the altar of obedience;—these are steps that lead us nigh to God; it may be well not to say *the* steps, to the exclusion of others; but certainly these steps are Godward, and he who follows these will follow others, if others be needed. It is not meant that these are all the emotions of which the Christian breast is susceptible. There is holy resignation, there is joyful acquiescence, together with gratitude and love; there is joy in God, with a peace which passeth understanding. These, and various other devout affections, have been passed by, because they are perhaps rather the results of being nigh to God, than the means by which we draw nigh; or if this be

not so, then they are either the outgrowth of the same spirit which has been so fully described, or they are but different manifestations of it.

But leaving this last question unsettled, enough has been said to give us some apprehension of what is meant by drawing nigh to God. It is a matter of feeling. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." But though it be a matter of feeling, yet if these feelings do not exhibit themselves in your daily life, you are not worshipping in *truth*; your feelings are not genuine, and you are deceiving yourself with a false hope. On the other hand, if your daily life shows that the feelings described are part of your habitual frame, then you are so close to God that it can be said of you, as was said of him who was translated, that he should not see death, "He walked with God."

II. Supposing the condition to have been complied with, it will be agreeable, as well as profitable, to consider the promise which is annexed to it, and to form, if we can, some conception of what is meant by God's drawing nigh to us. An adequate conception, it probably is not possible either to present or to entertain. There are experiences of the heart which cannot be explained to the understanding. We love to be with our friends, and every heart knows the joy of being near to the loved; but who could ever convey to one who had never felt them the least idea of these emotions? How tame and insufficient any description that could be given! Human language is the instrument of the intellect rather than of the soul, and the latter can but very imperfectly express itself through such a medium. We need the dialect of another sphere, of a spiritual state, in which to give utterance to our heart-life. Many of our inner experiences, and especially our communings with God, if described as mere intellections, are like a sublime poem translated from the original tongue, not

only into another language, but into a meaner; and, suffering much from translation at all, is ruined by the effort to force it into a language not capable of containing it. Regarding the subject objectively, it will be even still more difficult, if possible, to present it adequately; for the nature of God is so far beyond our capacities, that we cannot say or know, in exact terms, what he does. Much of our language must be figurative, and much of it can be appreciated only by those whose spiritual intuitions anticipate the sentiment before it is expressed.

But to our theme. In each of the particulars in which we draw nigh to God, there is a corresponding action on his part; each emotion in our hearts is met by its correlative in the divine bosom.

1. For instance, if we desire to have an interview with God, he gratifies the desire by giving us the interview. Is not this what the Psalmist meant when he said: "His ears are open unto their cry"? *Psa. xxxiv. 15.* In another place (*Psa. cxvi. 2*), he says: "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." A figure of speech, of course, but a figure of which "the original idea is that of leaning forward to catch a sound otherwise too faint to be distinctly audible";<sup>1</sup> and in this light, the figure brings out beautifully the thought of God's readiness to hear, when we wish to speak; it is more than hearing; it is listening, listening as if eager to catch the first aspiration. God spake to many in ancient days, "face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." *Ex. xxxiii. 11.* God is just as able, and just as willing to hold intercourse with his people now as he ever was. Why not? Has his nature changed? True, he does not now make visible or audible manifestations of his presence, and for this we can see a good reason; but his presence need be none the less real. Angels

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Alexander on *Psalms*.

and disembodied spirits doubtless hold communication with each other, not oral nor audible, for there is between them no atmospheric medium, nor have they organs of speech and hearing; yet who can doubt that their correspondence is far more perfect and glorious than any that can be carried on by material media? God is a Spirit; and there is a spiritual nature also in man. Does the connection of the latter with its clay so impair its functions that it is wholly incapable of spiritual intercourse? Who can prove this? Many phenomena seem to point the opposite way. Has God so constituted us as to cut himself off from communication with us? Nay, thousands can testify, as Paul did, that his Spirit has borne witness with their spirits.

There is also far more dignity and sublimity in our position, than in that of those who had outward manifestations. A moral perception of things invisible to the natural eye is as far superior to physical sight as the spirit is to the clay that clogs it. "Seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27) is a superior perception, that savors of divinity; for it is thus only that God perceives. As there is greater dignity, so also there is higher blessing attached to this nobler sight. "Thomas," said our Saviour, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Observe the distinction made in favor of those whose moral convictions outstrip the testimony of their senses. We think it would be a glorious thing to talk with God, as Abraham and Jacob and Moses did. But the Christian would be a loser by exchange with the patriarchs. Their view of Christ was very dim; ours is very clear; and it is through him that we have "access to the Father." Eph. ii. 18. There can be no real nearness to God, even if he were to manifest himself to our natural eyes, except with those who know something of his nature, and of his character. Since he has disclosed himself in his word, and espe-

cially since he has become incarnate in his Son, we have a much more perfect knowledge of him, and can therefore enjoy far deeper communion with him, than was possible before these glorious revelations were made.

In the assurance of our text there is great encouragement to sinners, as well as comfort to saints. It is an invitation to the vilest. Let such an one but desire to converse with God, and God will listen. This is no unscriptural flattering of the souls of men. It is not giving an unallowable emphasis to the text, to say: "Draw nigh to God, and *he will draw nigh to you.*"

2. But we take another view of God's nearness to us. Does our reverence for his character prompt us to adore and worship him? He draws nigh to us by accepting our services, and by imbuing us with a consciousness that they are accepted. He so controls our spirits too, that it affords us delight to think that the poor praises we offer are heard in heaven, and excel the songs of the angels. Nor is this a delusion. No angel ever sang, as we can do, the song of Moses and of the Lamb. No angel's harp was ever tuned by a Saviour's hand. No angel choristers ever heard the voice of the Great Intercessor mingled with theirs. Our praises may be like the rude winds, but passing through the Great Mediator, as through an Æolian harp set in the window of heaven, their harsh tones are softened, and sweetened into melody, such as cannot be made on the other side.

God had respect unto the sacrifice of Abel, not for Abel's sake alone, but for ours. By his palpably manifest acceptance of worship at the very beginning of the world, he teaches to all the posterity of Adam his willingness to be worshiped, and his favor to the worshiper. In numberless instances he has miraculously exhibited his acceptance of homage; and this was not for the benefit of the individual, but of the race. Is not the acceptance as real now? Has

God changed? In the exercise of a sublime faith, the worshiper now experiences a gratification no less real, and far more elevated, than that of those whose sacrifices were consumed in their sight by fire from heaven.

3. If we confess our unworthiness, and thus draw nigh to God, he draws correspondingly nigh to us, by enabling us to take comfort from those passages in his word which assure us that he pities our unworthiness, and by making us conscious that, unworthy as we are, he is ready to make us worthy in the blood of the atonement, and then to receive us to his embrace. God comforts the mourner; he binds up the broken-hearted; he lifts up the humble. The prostrate sinner he takes by the hand, raises him up, and sweetly soothes his sorrows and dissipates his fears. It is no figure of speech, it is a literal statement of fact, that the Spirit of God does operate directly and immediately on the heart, that is, on the feelings, of the truly penitent sinner, and relieves, cheers, and comforts him. Is not this drawing nigh? "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy. I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isa. lvii. 15. Is not this just what we have been saying? Hear the evangelical prophet again: "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Isa. lxi. 1-3. Is this a figure of speech? Or is it of doubtful interpretation? Then hear the Psalmist: "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psa. cxlvii. 3. Modern experience confirms prophecy, or rather prophecy confirms experience. There can be no doubt of the fact, that the man who draws nigh to God with a deep sense of unworthiness will receive comfort imme-

diately from God ; that is, God's Spirit will so influence his spirit, in a way which we cannot understand, as to relieve and console him. This is what is meant by God's drawing nigh to us.

4. Another phase of the divine mercy is exhibited when we draw nigh to God through his Son, Jesus Christ, feeling our need of this Great Mediator and Redeemer. Here God meets us, by an action on his part corresponding exactly to this on ours. His Spirit, acting directly on our feelings, on our consciousness, enables us to realize that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, and that by him we not only have access to special divine attention, but a certain passport to infinite mercy. He enables us to rely on Christ with joyous confidence, and to feel safe and happy in his hands. He shows us beauty and loveliness in Christ, wholly unappreciated by them that are afar off. To them that do not believe our report, now, as when Isaiah sighed over the infidelity of his times, "He hath no form nor comeliness," and, when they see him, there is no beauty, that they should desire him. But to those that believe, now, as when Peter wrote, "He is precious." They see in himself all that is amiable and excellent and great. They see in what he has done, ample salvation. They see in what he is doing, certain security. They see in what he will do, exceeding great reward. No man can see all this treasure in Christ, and realize that it is *his*, without help from God ; for the carnal mind is blind to these things, and they are spiritually discerned. But a sinful man who will come trusting in Christ, though he does not see him as he is, nor know much about his character and work, will find that God will draw nigh to him, by opening his eyes, so that he can see his Saviour *as* his Saviour. Casting away all figure of speech, what is meant is, in literal terms, that the Spirit of God will so affect, by means unknown to us, the man's mind and feelings, that he will be



able to appreciate the value of the Saviour in all his offices. Those who appreciate Christ, he appreciates and loves; and a bond of union is thus established between them, and they are, as it were, identified and united. It is a great thing to be one with Christ. Christ is at the right hand of the Father, and they who are with him cannot be far from God.

5. That confidence in the promises of God's word which brings us nigh to him, and which has been already spoken of, is also duplex in its effect, and superinduces corresponding action on his part. His Spirit so operates on our spirits as to increase and strengthen our confidence. He makes our faith so strong that it becomes to us a source of great delight. Nothing is so precious and valuable to a Christian as his faith; and an offer of all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, would be no inducement to him to part with it, or to consent to the slightest diminution of it. Nor does this strong and delightful gift originate with ourselves; it is the gift of God; it is an actual bestowment; it is *given* to the saints to believe. Phil. i. 29. Eph. ii. 8. Those who do not draw nigh to God never receive this gift. Who ever saw a godless man made happy by the promises? The children of this world sometimes claim to be happy. Do they draw their happiness, or any part of it, from the promises of God? Do they even profess to do so? Their happiness comes from no such source as this, but rather from health, and wealth, and family, and friends, and position, and power, with the gayeties and pleasures attendant upon those things. But whether it be the peasant in his lowly cot, or the royal disciple who wears a crown, every Christian will testify that his greatest delight is in the promises of the gospel, and will say, with the Prince-poet of Israel, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me," whether they be of joy or sorrow, "thy comforts delight my soul." Psa. xciv. 19. The Christian who follows God only afar off, as some are apt to do, feels a

confidence, which is weak in degree, and supplies only a meagre satisfaction. His way is dark, his steps are feeble, and he lives in a state of perpetual apprehension. But he who can say with the Psalmist, "My soul followeth hard after thee," can also say with him, and with all others who draw nigh, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." *Psa. xlv. 1-3, 7.* The man who is far from God enjoys no such tranquil assurance as this. Like the guilty who suspects an officer behind every bush, fears beset him, and the least untoward circumstance alarms him; the thought of news startles him; he is "afraid of evil tidings." *Psa. cxii. 7.* While this sense of insecurity is chronic with him, the sense of safety abides, by day and by night, with him who "dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High," and abideth "under the shadow of the Almighty." *Psa. xci. 1.* He is "not afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." *Psa. xci. 5-6.* He knows that the Almightyness of God is pledged to make all things work together for good to them that love him. He knows that the everlasting arm that controls the cloud, and the cyclone, and the earthquake, and that upholds the world, encircles him. The world may scowl upon him, and the Prince of the power of the air may raise a tempest about him, and launch his lightnings; but in vain. Above the roar of the storm the Christian's voice may be heard singing—

Should earth against my soul engage,  
And fiery darts be hurled,  
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,  
And face a frowning world !

Every heart-throb of his life, if it were articulate, would say, "I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." (Psa. xxiii. 4.) Is not the reason for this fearlessness and quiet sufficient? Draw nigh to God, and you will not be unnoticed; nay, you will be received and protected under the shadow of the wing of the Almighty.

6. Finally, when we draw nigh to God by dedicating ourselves and our all to him, he meets our advance, by giving us in our hearts an assurance that he accepts at our hands that which we bring, and that he regards it as a treasure. True, God is not made richer by what we give; still we know that he regards our offerings *as if* he were made richer. However worthless in ourselves, we are nevertheless bought with the precious blood of Christ, and thus raised to grandeur in value. If dignity and worth are not innate, they are nevertheless engrafted upon us, and we are made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4); and thus it is no small offering; nor unworthy the acceptance of the Almighty, which we lay upon his altar. Does the expression seem to be too strong? Then let Christ speak for himself: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John xvii. 10.) If the Son is glorified in them, is not the Father also glorified? The man who lays himself on God's altar knows that his person and his services are dear to God; he knows what none can know but they who have experienced it, the rapture of saying, "Accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

But this is not all. When we give ourselves to God, he draws doubly nigh, by not merely accepting us, but by giving himself in return. This, too, seems like saying a great deal, and such an expression ought surely to have strong warrant. Hear then what Jesus Christ says: "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John xiv. 23. And on the same line of thought, the beloved disciple says: "He that dwelleth in

love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 John iv. 16. Nor is there any warrant for taking away the power of these passages by supposing them to be mere figures of speech. It is but literal truth and actual fact, ye saints, that the "Spirit of truth . . . dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" John xiv. 17; that ye are, indeed, "the temple of the living God." 2 Cor. vi. 16. Or if uninspired phrase be desired, God Almighty does, in some mysterious way, actually and really transfuse his Spirit into the spirits of his children. Incomprehensible, indeed, is this confluence of spirits; but the fact is set forth in the Scriptures, not for us to comprehend, but for us to accept, and for us to enjoy. Revelations are made to the heart, which cannot be made to the understanding; and as our moral nature is superior to the intellectual, the revelations made to the former are correspondingly superior, more glorious, and more divine. This then is the great reward of drawing nigh to God in self-dedication. God reciprocates the act, and for ourselves he gives us himself. Thus is fulfilled that wonderful prayer of our Lord: "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" John xvii. 21; and thus is warrant given to that wonderful Scriptural figure, which grouping the saints together in the church gives it the all-glorious appellation of "The Bride, the Lamb's wife," and represents the final consummation of their union in heaven as "The marriage supper of the Lamb."

Now let us recur to the text. "Draw nigh to God," there is the service; "and he will draw nigh to you," there is the reward. Is the reward high enough? Those who would not be moved by such considerations would seem to be wholly out of reach. Surely it must be that they do not see the truths that are held up to their view. Surely, they sit in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death, and to them no light is sprung up. Have they wandered so far

from God, have they plunged so deeply into the abyss of sin, that no ray of light even from the eternal throne can find its way to their dismal abode?

It may be well to say, before closing this discussion, that we have spoken specifically of what might have been expressed in generic terms. God watches all the modes of our inner life, no less than he does our outward actions. Whatever phenomena occur in these, corresponding, and we may say sympathetic, phenomena must occur in the divine mind. If God counts our hairs, and notices the fall of one of them, he must notice every wave, every ripple, of emotion, whether good or bad. Towards the good, his love flows out; from the evil, his holiness draws away. He never slumbers nor sleeps. Nothing right can fail of his approbation; nothing wrong can escape his displeasure. We seem to grasp the promise of the text all the better when we see that it is but a specific application of a general principle.

With two or three practical remarks we conclude:

(1.) Those feelings which constitute a drawing nigh to God, we ought to express. We ought to express them in the closet, in the family, in the sanctuary, and in the ordinances of the Lord's house. Like flame which without outlet is smothered and dies, these emotions require utterance; while, as flame is increased and brightened by escape, these holy affections are strengthened, and developed by expression. As for those who never express them, they never experienced them; and if they have a hope, it is a false one.

(2.) We ought not to be satisfied with occasional feelings such as have been described, but should endeavor to make them habitual. Those who profess to have experienced these emotions on a single occasion, or at remote intervals, are doubtless either deceived or deceiving, and have no part nor lot in the matter.

There are two obstacles in the way of drawing nigh to

God, which can be mentioned only as the geographer marks on his map a quicksand or a shoal.

The first is an unwillingness to give up sin. Many see the reasonableness of the service required, and something of the glory of the reward offered; and there are promptings within them, which, if yielded to, would lead them to duty and to its rewards; but their hearts are with the world; they linger on its confines, as Lot's wife did by blazing Sodom. Turn away! be quick! fly for your lives!

Another obstacle is want of confidence. A sinful man may feel that in his vileness he would be so hateful to the Holy One, that it would be needless for him to attempt to come. But consider this: Away from God you must perish; you can but perish if you come. Queen Esther once said in desperation, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." But for you to come to the King *is* according to law; nay, it is the law and commandment of the King that you *shall* come. Come, then, fearlessly. The golden sceptre was extended to the Persian Queen, with the promise of half Ahasuerus' kingdom. Draw nigh to the King in Zion, and the golden sceptre will be extended to you, with all the promises recorded in the word of God.

Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me;  
Still all my song shall be  
Nearer, my God, to thee!  
Nearer to thee!

## SERMON XVI.

### *MULTIFORM LOVE.*

“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”—MATTHEW xii. 50.

**T**HAT is no feeble tie of affection that exists between brothers. God has so ordered, and wisely ordered, that those who owe their being to the same parents, and a large part of whose life must of necessity be spent together, should entertain for each other the warmest emotions of love. From earliest infancy, through boyhood and youth, and on to manhood, there exist between them common interests, enjoyments, sorrows, hopes, and fears. This of itself would tend to beget a strong feeling of mutual regard; but all this is small when compared to the consciousness of the parties that their origin is identical and their blood the same. Even if brothers be separated in early infancy by some accident, and never meet until mature manhood, the moment they do meet and recognize each other as brothers, feelings of intensest interest will spring up between them. By some mysterious law brothers' love will spring into life, instantaneously mature. Such is the effect of kindred, and such the power of the fraternal tie.

This peculiar form in which human affection manifests itself is one of the forms of affection with which Christ claims to regard his people. “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven,” says he, “the same is my brother.” He does not say he is *like* my brother,” but, claiming kindred, he says “he *is* my brother.” It is delightful to think, that that Saviour on whom we rely for our

eternal welfare, is not a stranger, nor even a mere acquaintance, nor yet a mere *friend*; but that he is actually a brother, and that he declares himself to entertain for us every feeling that a brother could cherish.

There is no good emotion in the human breast, that is not felt by the Almighty. Our feelings are but a counterpart of his, and, so far as they go, are like them. So if we would know what his feelings are, we have a sample of them in our own bosoms. All the difference is, that our feelings are imperfect and finite, while his are perfect and infinite. We are made in his image, his *moral* image; i. e., our moral feelings, our affections, are like his. That strong yearning which brothers feel for each other, our Saviour feels for us, only in infinitely greater degree than mortals ever know.

Our Saviour seems to take peculiar pleasure in claiming this relationship with his disciples. Just after he had risen from the dead, he said, "Go tell my *brethren* that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me"; or, as another evangelist more fully records it, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"; thus, as it were, confirming the tie of brotherhood by claiming a common paternity. An apostle, speaking of the unity which flows from this common parentage, says, "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." In another place the same apostle says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many *brethren*." The picture of brotherhood is here made the more glowing, by the reference to the family likeness which exists between Christ and his people; a likeness stronger than that between brothers when they most resemble each other, "Whom he did predestinate to be *conformed to the image* of his Son." True, the resemblance



now may seem to be but feeble. It is like that between a mature man, and his infant brother of a day old. The *elements* of resemblance are there, though they can scarcely be seen. But time will develop them. When we have attained to the stature of *perfect men* in Christ Jesus, which we never can do until we reach a world where there is no *sin*, then will the resemblance be gloriously manifest. We shall one day "fall asleep," marred by sin as we are; but when we awake, we shall "awake with his likeness." Christ foresees this perfect resemblance,—its element he now sees,—the relationship which gives rise to it now exists; "for which cause he is not ashamed" now "to call us brethren," nor unwilling to admit us to a corresponding intimacy.

But further than this. There is a peculiar regard which a right-hearted man has for his sister, differing somewhat from that which he feels for a brother. In the former case there is a tenderness in the tie, that does not exist in the latter. It is an affection, whose fibre and texture are more delicate than in the love we have for those of our own sex, and yet it is not weaker for this greater softness, but stronger. If one be like a hempen cord, the other is a cord of silk, more tenacious though finer; or, changing the figure, the love for a sister is like that for a brother passed through the furnace one more time—once more refined, purged of dross and purified.

Our Saviour, not satisfied with expressing a brother's affection, would seem in our text, to assert also *this* form or manifestation of love. He claims to exercise towards us fraternal feelings, in this its highest form of development, and in this its utmost degree of refinement. Do we regard with affectionate respect the pure and hallowed forms of our sisters? Christ regards with far higher esteem the persons of those whom his blood has made pure and sanctified. Are we ready to protect and defend our sisters? to supply their

wants, and shield their weakness? to throw ourselves between them and those that would harm them, or even *touch* them rudely, or throw a stain upon their names? Christ exercises the same feelings of jealous care and tenderness towards them whom he loves. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother *and sister*."

But there is another relation, which gives rise to emotions quite different from any we have yet described. I refer to that most tender relationship which one sustains to his *mother*. She is the object of our earliest affections. The very first being one learns to love is his mother. As he throws his infant arms around her neck, so the first and purest affections of his heart entwine themselves around hers. He has not yet been corrupted by this wicked world. He is in a state of comparative innocency—purer then than he ever is afterwards; and the affection that he has for his mother is the only one that he has then, when his heart is unsoiled and at its best. And as it is his first love, so also it is his last. There is no divorce from one's mother. There is no contingency in this life that can dissolve the tenderness, or weaken the power of that tie. But whatever there is peculiar in this affection pertains also to the love of Christ; for says he: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister *and mother*." Thus he avails himself of this tender and sacred relationship, as well as of the others, in order to illustrate his feeling for us. His own mother was standing by, whom he loved and revered. To her, he had been an obedient son; for the evangelist tells us that he was "subject" to his parents in the season of youth. Of her, he thought and spoke, and provided for her comfort, when he hung upon the cross. Yet when this very mother "stood without desiring to speak with him," instead of at once obeying her summons, he lingered and said: "Who is my mother? Whosoever shall do the

will of my Father, . . . the same is my mother." Thus by a momentary seeming neglect of the first friend he ever had in this world, and doubtless the tenderest, and certainly one of the firmest; and by seeming to forget, and almost to deny, his relationship to her; and by applying to his disciples the epithet that belonged to her, he evinced for them an affection similar in kind to the sacred and tender regard we owe to our mothers, but greater in degree.

"A threefold cord," says the proverb of Solomon, "is not easily broken." Here is a threefold cord, composed of the love of "brother, and sister, and mother." But leaving the phraseology of the text, yet in pursuance of its principle, we may observe that in other parts of the Scripture almost all the other domestic relations are referred to, in order to illustrate the varied powers of the love of Christ. On one occasion our Saviour said to his disciples, in fatherly tones, "Children, have ye any meat?" And if we regard Christ as co-equal and identical with the Divine Being, and the Author of life, it is easy to concede that he is the "Everlasting Father," as well as the Prince of peace. Whatever peculiarity, then, there is in a father's affection for his children, exists also, only in a greater degree, in Christ's affection for us.

But we all know that parental feeling as experienced by a father is not exactly like that of a mother. There is a sort of deathless power in the love of a mother for the child of her own bosom that seems sometimes to outrival every other form in which human affections develop themselves. There is about it a peculiar unction, and fragrance, and tenderness, and energy. Yet, says the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the love of the Holy One, "Can a mother forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee." Whatever peculiarity there is in a mother's love is also to be found in the love of Christ.

There is another domestic relation whose tie is stronger than either of those that we have been considering, or than *all* of them. I refer to that most profound emotion that ever absorbs the human soul—conjugal love. But whatever there is in *this* affection that is endearing above all others, is found also in the love of Christ. The union between husband and wife seems to be the favorite one used in the word of God to designate the union between Christ and his people. “Come hither,” said the angel, speaking to John of the church, “and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife”; and says the writer, “I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Nor is this all. We know that there is a peculiar affection that exists between friends, as such, entirely different from the love of kindred, and yet in some instances scarcely less warm and ardent. Christ, as if to exhaust the whole catalogue of human affections, has not only gone around the family circle, and claimed the peculiarities of the love arising from each relationship, but has left that circle, and claims also to be bound to us by all that is sacred and dear in the tie of friendship. Says he, “I call you not servants; I have called you *friends*.” So, also, there is a peculiar affection that a pastor has for the people of his care. This, too, Christ claims to feel; for he is the great Pastor, the great Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep. There may be a peculiar form of affectionate regard that a king has for his subjects. If so, its qualities may be found in the love of Christ; for he is King in Zion. Thus might the same principle be pursued through all the rounds of relations known among men, and it would appear that there is no element of love as exercised by us that is not found in the love of Christ; and that there is no stimulus to the affections here that has not its counterpart in the bosom of our

Divine Redeemer. The whole must include all the parts; and, since "God is love," must not his nature be a synthesis or combination of all that constitutes love?

Facts enough have now been presented—particularly as the number might obviously be increased to an almost indefinite extent—to warrant us in the induction of a principle. The principle will be found to be important, and to lead to valuable results. It is this: Every relation between moral beings, gives rise to a peculiar set of emotions; and it may be added that if the relation is a happy one, the emotions arising from it are affectionate. The truth of the principle will be recognized, when we glance back at the ground over which we have come. The relation between parent and child, gives rise to an affection peculiarly its own; so also from the relation of husband and wife, there springs a specific and con-natural affection which nothing but this relation can produce or excite; and the relation of brother and sister elicits a manifestation of love, characterized by different marks from any other form of affection. The same principle will evidently hold good through all possible relations, known and unknown.

Now Christ sustains some relations to us that we do not sustain to each other, and cannot. Hence, he has some affections for us, which are different from anything we ever felt, and cannot be illustrated by anything of which we have any knowledge. For instance, if we regard Christ as the great Creator—for without him was not anything made that was made—he then sustains to us the relation of a Creator to his creatures. This relation, applying our principle, must, like all other moral relations, be the source of an affection such as could spring from no other source. What this affection is, we do not know; and we never *can* know; for the relation of Creator, from which it springs, is one which we never can sustain. But as this is the sublimest of all relations, it is but reasonable to infer that the affection which flows from it is

the most transcendent of all affections. Like begets like, in the nature of God, as well as in the nature of things. And if a meagre and short-lived relationship begets a corresponding kind of regard, why should not the sublime and eternal relationship which an Almighty Creator bears to his creatures, give birth to an affection commensurately glorious and profound? It is but a rational inference that the love of a Creator as far surpasses in power, in tenderness, and in ardor all affections of which we have any knowledge, as the act of creation surpasses any action of which we are capable. With our perceptions enlightened by this conclusion, and our minds enlarged by its contemplation, we may possibly form some faint idea of what our Saviour means, when he says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When some time ago we saw that the love of Christ was like that of a brother, we felt happy in the endearing relation. When added to this, there was the peculiar tenderness of the love of a sister, we felt a precious delight that we never knew before. When added to this, there was the fervor of a mother's love; and when added to this again, was the varied strength of every other tie known to mortals, in any relationship they do or can sustain to each other, we felt a happy nearness to our Saviour, and a joyous confidence in the eternal strength of the bond of union between us. But now from the relation of Creator, there springs a new affection, so far surpassing all that exists among men, that they seem as nothing. If every conceivable tie of human endearment were united, the bond thus formed by the combination would seem by comparison to be but a thread—a hair which a breeze might break, while that inconceivable bond of love which springs from the sublime relation of Creator is like a cable on which the universe is suspended.

I have said that the relation of Creator is the most glorious and exalted of all relations. Perhaps I was wrong. It may be—perhaps there is little doubt of it—that the relation of Redeemer is *more* glorious. It may be that in the divine contemplation the act of redemption holds far higher rank than the act of creation. There are reasons for believing that this is so; and *if* so, Christ is bound to us by far dearer ties as his redeemed, than as his creatures. As his creatures, he spoke us into being; we were created, as it were, by a breath. But as his redeemed, we are they for whom he forsook his throne, assumed our nature, put on flesh, was crucified, poured out his blood, and died. Here the power of our conceptions is entirely exhausted. Up to this point, we have not been so entirely at fault. When we considered the love arising from the relation of Creator, we were conscious that we could know nothing of it. Yet perhaps it was not so far beyond our capacities but that we could imagine ourselves to form some faint conception of its nature. But if there be another form of love still higher than this, and springing from a relation more glorious; if the culminating point of the one be but the starting point of the other,—for if we had not been infinitely dear as his creatures, we should never have been his redeemed,—our minds recoil. We have seen none of the glory; for no man hath seen it, nor can see. We are blinded by excess of light.

Yet this is not all. In our Saviour's memorable prayer, addressing his Father in reference to his people, he says: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." So then he sustains to us a new relation, from the fact that he has received us as his by the gift of the Father. We know not but that this relation is more tender than any we have yet considered. As Christ's redeemed we are his, by an act of his own; but in the new relation now under consideration we are his, by an act of his eternal Father. May we not sup-

pose that, in the estimation of the Son, this last relation outranks the former? Qualities which are incorporated upon an object frequently make it more precious than those which are intrinsic. A gift is valued, not merely for what it is *worth*, but because it *is* a gift. If the same thing were ours by our own act of purchase, its value might be comparatively small; but as it is a gift, we prize it because of the giver. It seems to partake of the qualities and merits of the giver. In proportion as the giver is honored, revered, and loved, in that proportion the gift is precious, and elicits the warmest and tenderest emotions of the soul.

What infinite endearment binds in eternal union the persons of the Godhead! "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Is not the gift invested with infinite loveliness, in view of the source whence it comes? Is not the relation thus created unparalleled even by the relations of Creator and Redeemer? It can be no heresy to imagine that it is so. Now if every relation has an affection of its own, and if that affection develops the powers of the soul in proportion to the tenderness and dignity of the source whence it springs, what shall we say of the love springing from a relation, before which the sublime relations of Creator and Redeemer stand diminished!

But there are other relations of a lower degree than those last referred to, which must yet give rise to affections that greatly enhance the love of Christ. A teacher, who affectionately imparts rich stores of instruction to admiring pupils, insatiate of knowledge, sustains to them a relation not destitute of power to develop an affection of its own. Doubtless, many will bear witness with me that the thought of some revered preceptor, even after long years of separation, will give rise to emotions tender and tearful. Nor is this affection without a correlative. We love those whom we instruct. If we even select a favorite plant, and daily water and cherish



it, our feelings become enlisted ; we take peculiar pleasure in its growth and beauty, and a sigh of regret escapes us when we leave it, or when storms destroy it. How much greater the rapture to behold an immortal spirit bud and bloom and bear precious fruit, under our culture ! How affectionate the complacency with which we look upon excellence that has been the growth of our care and toil ! In an eternal world, our Divine Saviour, who taught us by precept and example here, will still be our Teacher, and unfold to us forever "the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." If in this world our affections receive a peculiar kind of stimulus from this relation, in which there is more of intellectuality than sentiment, may we not suppose that in the world to come the same relation will impart a stimulus the same in kind, but as far superior in degree as the tuition of heaven is superior to the feeble teachings of earth ?

But if the mere communication of instruction to the mind gives rise to an affectionate relation, ought not the actual communication of virtue to the soul to beget a relation as far superior as moral excellence is to intellectual power ? If so, be it remembered that Christ is made to us, not only "wisdom," but "sanctification." When he looks upon us in his Father's kingdom, forever developing more and more beauty, excellence, and majesty, all as the result of the shedding of his blood, think you not that he will look upon his sanctified ones with a yearning which he would not feel but for that relation ?

Moreover : we are the subjects of the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son ; and we know not how glorious may be the relation thus created, nor how profound the affection that flows from it. Furthermore : There may be, there doubtless are, an indefinite number of other relations, whose glorious qualities exceed our conceptions, and which beget innumerable other forms and manifestations of the divine love. Perhaps in another world we shall learn

some of them ; but probably there are many, of which our conceptions, even in the remotest ages of eternity, will be very inadequate.

But to return to the phraseology of the text: " Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Each one of the endearing relations here referred to gives rise, as has already often been said, to an affection peculiar to itself. It is worthy of remark, that we exercise only one of these forms of affection towards one person. But in the love of Christ to *each one* of his disciples, the power, the unction, the tenderness, and every shade of every excellence of all these varied forms of love, are united. His disciple, he says, is his " brother, *and* sister, *and* mother." We give to a father, or mother, or sister, or friend, all the love that *that relationship* begets, and no more, thus exhausting only one department of our moral feelings ; but the love of Christ exhausts all the powers of the human soul : for he gives to each individual disciple that whole round of varied and diverse affections that we divide among all our domestic and social relations ; and besides all this, he loves each one with the *more* varied and *more* ardent affections springing from *other* and *more glorious* relations such as we know nothing of. *Our* affections gurgles up from a thousand different springs within us, and each one trickles off in a little rill by itself, each pursuing a different course and reaching a different point. But in the bosom of Christ there are all the thousand springs of love that we have, sending off their little rills just as ours do ; and, besides this, there are with him innumerable other and larger springs, whence great rivers gush ; and all these countless rills and rivers do not run off in different directions as ours do, but run *together*, and are united in one vast river, every drop of whose ceaseless flood is infinite blessing to each individual believer.

If it be true that in the love of Christ for each disciple are united all the forms and powers of love that have been specified or referred to, it follows that he virtually stands to us in *every* relation, and is therefore our ALL; and in this fact is there not involved a new relation, overtopping even the sum of all the others? The very fact that he is "ALL AND IN ALL" to us, is itself a distinct relation, with idiosyncrasies of its own; and, from this, it would seem that there must spring an appropriate affection, marked with all the individuality and infiniteness of its parent relation. If so, the aggregate of all these varied relations that have been spoken of produces something more than the mere power of accumulation. For when all the powers of love are added together there accrues a new relation, and, consequently, a new power, to be superadded to the former aggregate. What the measure of this new power may be we know not; but in an eternal world, among other sublime discoveries, it may be ours to learn that the love of Christ, with its multipotent energies, is a grand composite, of which all prime affections are but the factors.

And now, my brethren, in view of the love of Christ for us, how ought we to feel towards him? How can we ever reciprocate as we ought such affection? Oh, the love that we have to our kindred, however endearing the tie, how feeble it ought to be in comparison with the love we bear to our Lord Jesus Christ! Father, mother, brother, sister, wife, child, tender indeed and stronger than life and death are the ties that bind us to these; but, if they were all united, let them be but a rope of sand, when compared to that eternal tie that binds us to our Saviour. Christ himself has used stronger language than this. "If any man come to me and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26.

Can it be possible that, in view of the amazing love of Christ, there are those in whose bosoms not an echo of reciprocal emotion is awakened? Surely they cannot be living men. These are they of whom the Holy Ghost says, that they are "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Are there those who, professing to be his people, love their houses, or their lands, or their money, more than they love their Saviour? How depraved, how perverted, how lost to all that is excellent! How can they be happy in that world where there are no houses nor lands, where money is of no avail, where property does not exist, and where the only treasure is in Christ? Those only to whom Christ is *precious* in *this* life, can enjoy him in the life to come.

But, my brethren, let us return to our text: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." No doubt we have all rejoiced in the delightful assurance which these words convey, and have luxuriated in the application of the principle which they seem to imply. But perhaps our rejoicing has not been on proper grounds. There is one clause of our text not noticed as yet, which describes the persons who may appropriate to themselves its benediction. "Whosoever shall *do*," mark the word, "whosoever shall *do* the will of my Father." This is the descriptive phrase, which narrows down the circle of appropriators to a very small class. Your rejoicing may be just in proportion as you have evidence that you are *doing* his will. Your *feelings* may class you among the saints, but your actions and your life may award you a different classification. If so, our text contains no promise nor blessing for you. Its blessing is restricted to them that "*do*" his will. But here is a saying of our Saviour which you may appropriate: "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them *not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the

sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it." Take heed, you that think you rejoice in the love of Christ, lest you be building your houses upon the sand.

But there are some who *do* his will, and thus prove that they love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. These are they to whom Christ claims the relation of "brother, and sister, and mother." These are they to whom all the exuberant treasures of our text, yea, all the infinite treasures of the word of God, are appropriated. Their Saviour watches all their course with tenderness and incessant care, and in due time will receive them with joy into the embrace of everlasting love.

With what delight would a brother welcome a brother to the portals of heaven. How joyfully would one see a sister or a mother enter those everlasting doors. With what rapture would a mother welcome her children to her arms in the kingdom of the Redeemer. But all this is nothing, and *less* than nothing, compared to the glowing rapture, fervor, and love with which our Saviour will say to them who do his will, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

## SERMON XVII.

### *GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE.*

“All things work together for good to them that love God.”—  
ROMANS viii. 28.

**D**ID the apostle mean by this expression all that it can be made to mean? Did he mean literally that *all* things, giving the widest possible construction to the words, work together for good? Perhaps not. The context seems to indicate that he had special reference to our “infirmities,” that is, to our trials and sorrows. These are our chastisements, which are “for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.” Heb. xii. 10. Elsewhere the apostle says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” 2 Cor. iv. 17; and in view of such things, he says, in another place, “We glory in tribulations also.” Rom. v. 3. In this morning’s text, the apostle seems to limit his meaning to the infirmities, afflictions, and tribulations, referred to in the context, and in various other passages. Yet there are careful students of Scripture who are of the opinion that the most extended meaning may be fairly given to the words of the text. In any event, it is certain that if the apostle had used the words in their widest and most literal sense, he would have said no more than is true, and no more than he has virtually said in other places. A few of many such expressions may be referred to: “All things are yours, . . . whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ

is God's." 1 Cor. iii. 17. "All things are for your sakes." 2 Cor. iv. 15. In the very chapter from which the text is taken, the apostle says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Ver. 32. The original word for *all things* (πάντα) is the same in the passage last quoted as in our text, and is at a distance of a very few lines from it, one being in the twenty-eighth verse, and the other in the thirty-second; and in the latter instance the word (πάντα) is certainly not limited to any restricted sense. In the very same chapter, also, at ver. 17, the saints are said to be "heirs of God." What do these words mean? and what is it to be an heir of God? Can words be framed to mean more than these? Yet to bring out the thought even more distinctly, and to show that he meant all that he said, and to increase the emphasis, the apostle adds, that we are "joint heirs with Christ." Is there any limit to the meaning in this case? What is Christ's inheritance? Whatever it may be, the saints hold it in jointure with him, and the limits of their inheritance, if there be any, are co-extensive with the limits of his. His has no limits; and he himself says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. iii. 21. Can any language be more comprehensive? Can words mean more? Take all these passages together, and can there be any doubt about their signification? In the text, the apostle may, or may not, have used the words in their most comprehensive, and most exhaustive sense; but he *might* truthfully so have used them, and as the sentiment is corroborated by many other Scriptures, we feel at liberty to use the text in this way; selecting it in preference to others, simply because it is the only one which, in addition to the unbounded promise, conveys the idea of the universal *co-operation* of the "all things," and this co-

operation is the point which it is our object, on this occasion, more especially to develop.

“All things work together for good to them that love God.”

The fragments of the text, taken separately, convey distinct and complete ideas. The first three words declare that all things work. All God's creations are laborers; all things, without exception, work. All animated nature is busy; not only so, things inanimate, things which we describe as passive, are still at work. Even the senseless clod is at work. Ever since the moment of its creation it has been steadily exerting the silent, but potent, influence of gravitation, and thus doing its share in keeping the universe in balance. Not that power resides in matter, but that all matter has the power of the Almighty applied to it, which makes it efficient for carrying out his purposes. Work is the law of the universe. There is nothing idle. Everything that was made was made for a purpose; and so long as it exists it must bear on that purpose. It never loses a moment of its time. It exists only by God's will; its time is therefore his time, and God can never lose. Every event that occurs is for a purpose, and has behind it the energy of an omnipotent will, that knows no lagging and which will thrust its influence on until it has accomplished its end. To suppose that there is anything that does not work is to suppose either that it exists independently of God, or that he ordained it without a purpose; and neither of these suppositions can be for a moment endured. If all the events and things of eternity could speak, each one of the millions might say, as Christ once said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Nothing that God controls is in vain; and God controls all.

That your mind may be possessed with the thought of work, imagine yourself to go into a factory where a thousand wheels are whirling, some of them humming with untold



rapidity, and some more slowly, but steadily pursuing their circuit. The bands from one to another hasten through their rapid and ceaseless round; the operative keep pace with the machinery. You speak, but no one has time to answer. The din of business drowns your voice, and above all rises the thunder of the great driving wheel without, mingled with the roar of the cataract that turns it. Wherever you cast your eye you see motion, motion, motion, rapid or slow, but steady and tireless. Your head swims as you reel through this maelstrom of a thousand energies; and, as the same whirl of business that drew you in casts you out, you think, surely, work, work, work, is the law of this place. What is idle? Nothing! *Everything works!*

Oh! if we had ears to hear the secrets of the unseen world, the deep groanings of the whole creation in stupendous travail; if we had eyes to see all things visible and invisible in the wide universe of God, each and all at work for God, how should we be overwhelmed! No created being could endure the condition. The very thought is crushing. Planets whirl through space at *work*; suns blaze at their *work*; so, down to the dust, the atoms are at *work*; everything that has life is at *work*, from angels to insects; our conceptions *work*; the extremest attenuation of thought does *work*. From the greatest to the least, from the least to the greatest, all beings, things, and events are workers, and ever have been, and ever will be. From the moment of creation, eternity, filled with activities, resounds with the roar of a universe at work. The prophet, speaking of the wind, that "whirlth about continually, and returneth again according to his circuits," and of the rivers, that run into the sea, and return again to the place whence they came, illustrating the ceaseless unrest of creation, well exclaims, "All things are full of labor; *man cannot utter it.*" Ecc. i. 8.

Another fragment of the text can be used without injuring

the entirety. All things work *together*. Each event that occurs is not a distinct affair, separate and to itself, having no connection with anything else, but is only one item in the great series of things, all of which "work together." There is no one event or thing that ever did or ever will exist or occur, that is dissociated from all others. It is impossible for any one fact to stand alone; each fact leans upon some other fact; all facts lean on each other in a system of universal dependences. There can no more be a class of things detached and segregated, than there should be a single thing thus cut off and isolated. All events and things in both the moral and physical universe are warped, and woofed, and woven together in one continuous whole; so that if a single one of these events or things were taken out, a thread would be missing from beginning to end, and the whole texture would ravel.

We cannot think of God, but as a systematic God; there must be system in all his operations. Rising on this thought we reach another, and a superior; all God's operations form but *one* system; nor is it possible, that there should be more than one. If there were two or more, and they did not conspire to promote God's object in creation, that fact would argue either a divine inconsistency, or a failure of the divine plans; and if they did thus conspire, they would work together and form but one system. There can be but one set of principles in the divine nature, and these must be harmonious with each other. So even supposing the Almighty to create different systems from different motives, and with different objects in view, which doubtless he has done, yet those motives being all rooted in the nature of God, must be related to each other, and so consequently must be the objects that result from them. Thus, if he creates one system to promote his own glory, and another to bless his creatures, they must reciprocally affect each other; for whatever promotes his

glory blesses his creatures, and whatever blesses his creatures promotes his glory. So long as there is unity in the nature of God, there must be unity in his designs, and unity in their results. God is *one* God ; his nature is a unit ; his truth is a unit ; his universe is a unit. The work of the Almighty does not consist of separate little tasks independent of each other, but of one vast entirety, consistent with itself, wide as creation, and endless as eternity. God's work must be worthy of himself. It would not be so if it consisted of unconnected patches and shreds. To be worthy of an infinite God all things must be not only efficient, but co-efficient, working together to produce an infinite whole. Thus the infinite series of past, present, and future events may be compared to an endless succession of cogged wheels, playing into each other ; and if a cog be lost from one of the wheels the jar would be felt at every rotation over the whole system. Every event or thing is one of these wheels or one of these cogs ; no one of them works by itself, but plays into another, and that into another, and thus through to the end, so that "all things work together."

It may aid us in our conceptions of the universality of this principle to notice some of its operations on a smaller scale. Here, then, is the world on which we tread, governed by certain laws of gravitation and motion ; it revolves on its axis, and around the sun, and it promotes God's glory thus ; but it is only a *part* of the solar system, and it revolves together and works together with others ; it is but one of a team of worlds that courses along the sky. Our whole system may be revolving around some other system, and that around another. and that again around another, until, at last, the central sun around which all revolve may be larger in its diameter or in its radius than the distance from the earth to a fixed star." But however vast the entire system may be, its parts all work together harmoniously.

Descending now to still smaller matters, we see that every animal frame is a system whose parts work together. Take, for example, the human body. The action of the stomach on the food converts it into chyle and other juices, and these produce the blood; the action of the lungs exposes the blood to the air, which vitalizes it, and the action of the heart sets it in motion; the arteries and veins supply it with channels of circulation, and it reproduces flesh, and bone, and sinew, while the feet convey all to the place of labor, which the hands perform, under the guidance of the eye and ear, and thus the whole system works together.

The world and the elements work together; the parts of the animal system work together, and these two work together. We cultivate the ground, and it is the combined action of the terrestrial elements with the labor of man that either beautifies the earth or feeds its inhabitants; yet not without the co-operation of another worker ninety millions of miles away, but for whose light and heat the blighted seed would rot in the ground. Man and beast work together at the same plough; but if the earth, and the air, and the cloud, and the sun, and we know not what else, were not to aid in the work, all would be in vain.

All things work together. It may further aid our conceptions to observe that some things are made to work together whose nature is utterly diverse. No two things are so thoroughly dissimilar, and incompatible, as mind and matter; yet even these are brought into harmonious co-operation. It takes mind and matter both to make a man; and it is the invisible and intangible that supplies not only the intelligence, but the power; for the body without the spirit is as insensate as any other clay. How is it that spirit, which is at the farthest possible remove from matter, should be combined with it, and united to it, so as to form a homogeneous whole? We cannot explain, but the fact is

before us. And as we work together with all things that pertain to this world, whether animate or inanimate, so too there is a spirit world, where doubtless all things harmonize, at least as well as they do here, and these angelic ones work together with us; "for are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Yes, all things work together. There is not a single thing, past, present, or to come, in all the universe of mind or matter that is not compelled by almighty force to flow in the same channel with everything else, and to flow peacefully, and to contribute to one grand result. It is as though all were liquid, and though there be innumerable kinds of fluid, they are all brought to flow in one channel, and made to turn one great wheel, not a drop being lost or wasted, every drop doing part of the work, and thus being auxiliary to all the rest.

Now let us regard another point, which indeed is the main point. We have seen that heaven and earth have been compassed, and that all things in time and eternity, however incongruous, irreconcilable, and antagonistic by nature, have been coerced by a kind of almighty main strength into a huge partnership in work, combining together the forces of all. Now what is the object of all this stupendous gathering up, and unifying of powers? Is there all this labor and all this system, merely for the sake of labor and of system? Have we before us a mere machine contrived with amazing ingenuity, like a huge puzzle, infinite in dimensions, and infinite in complication, to do no good, to work out no practical result? The Almighty does not waste either his wisdom or his power. We may be sure that there is an object proposed, fully equal in dignity and value to the expenditure that has been made for its accomplishment. What is that object? There may be, there doubtless are, various objects which, however, in the end must become con-

fluent, and coalesce into unity. These objects, as factors for the production of the grand result, must meet in the end as peers. What is that grand result? Can we by searching find out the Almighty? Not by searching. But what he has revealed, we know. He has disclosed to us a part of his secret. One of the factors in the sum total of his infinite purpose, is the good of them that love him. All things work, and all things work together; and whatever other ends may be accomplished, one thing is certain; and that is, that, "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. i. 11), "all things work together for good to them that love God." Other ends wholly inconceivable by us, may simultaneously be brought about; but in the sublime culmination we know that this end is part of the peerage of God's eternal purpose.

All things work together for good to them that love God. The blazing glory of the promise blinds us by its excess of light. In the darkness of our minds, we cannot comprehend it. Then let us apprehend. Let us lay hold on it and call it ours; for it is ours. Brethren, derive from it consolation, comfort, joy, gladness, delight, exultation, as much as you can! There is no room to receive it; our cup runneth over! Oh, that we might have expansion of soul to take in more of it! But this we know, that the more we appreciate it, the more we shall glorify him who has vouchsafed such glory to us. Be not afraid of giving too wide a construction to the promise of God. It is impossible that our conceptions should outrun his goodness and his greatness. The joint heirs with Christ need set no limits to their domain; for, in so doing, they set limits to his; nor is there any doubt of their ownership; for their right is granted by the Almighty, and their title-deed is sealed with the blood of the everlasting covenant. Christ himself is ours; and if Christ is ours, are not all things ours? and if all things are ours, must they not work,

so far as they work at all, for our good? Nothing is idle; everything works; does anything work evil to God's elect? If not, then everything works for good. All things work together. Do they work harm to Christ and his people? If not, then all things work together for their good. The saints are hid with Christ in God. Do all things work together for their injury? If not, then all things work together for their good.

After all, it is incomprehensible. So let it be. But I pray you, measure not the Infinite One by finite standards; away with misgivings, cast off unbelief, and take the Almighty at his word. But is it not irrational to receive as truth that which seems to be impossible? We receive a thousand such things; but if this were the only one, it is far more irrational to doubt the revelation of God. Must you be let into all the secrets of infinite wisdom before you confide in the divine veracity? In other words, will you not believe God, until you yourself become God? Unbelief is the sin of the race. Infidelity to some degree will cling to the hearts, even of the people of God. Shall we never learn to believe that God is sincere? Shall we never realize that his promises are far richer in reality than our utmost conceptions can make them? Shall we never cease to fear that God, when put to the test, will fall short of what our imaginations, led on by his word, have made him? "All things work together for good to them that love God." Enlarged be our capacities, that we may be able to receive the truth, in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and fullness, and richness, and power!

We see, now, how the apostle could say, "We glory in tribulations." He knew that afflictions, as much as anything else, are ministers of God's mercy, and that they are working, together with all other things, for our good. Does he not express this sentiment when he says, in language already quoted,

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”? Are you afflicted? “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.” In the hour of your calamity remember that anything in the history of your life, or in the experience of your soul, that can be called by the name of trouble, or trial, or sorrow, or distress, or pain, is part and parcel of the great system devised by Infinite Wisdom to work for your good. If your friends die, or forsake you, or turn against you, or if *you* die or live, if you stand or if you fall, if you prosper or if you fail, no matter what occurs to you and becomes part of your history, that very thing is also a part of the history of the universe, and is interwoven with the illimitable and eternal tissue of all things, which work together for your good, and for the good of all the millions that love God. No event of your life, good or bad, great or small, could be omitted and leave God’s glorious plans complete. A great affliction is upon you. Would you, if you could, change or annihilate this part of your history? Such a deed would spoil all the scheme which God’s everlasting love has planned and set in operation for your good and for the good of them that love him. If a single pang that you suffer were left out, there would be a screw loose in the whole of God’s vast system of mercy. He knows that just so many trials and troubles, just so many pangs of pain and sorrow, are necessary. He will not send one more than is needful; no, not one. Aye, if one were left out, all the proportions of things would be altered, God’s plan would be frustrated, and the end would be disorder and ruin. God knows how to keep his universe in balance, and will not allow it to be jarred even so little as by the undue falling of a hair. “Are not the very hairs of your head all numbered”? Why this infinite particu-



larity about the most insignificant things, unless all things work together? So, if the most awful calamity that ever crushed the heart of man should befall you, let this be your feeling: I would not have it otherwise. God's will be done, and not mine. If mine were done, though it might seem best for the present, the future might be frightful overthrow; but, if God's will be done, all things will be sure to work together for good to them that love him. Take not from me the afflictions which God would have me bear. I cannot spare a single pang. If one of them were removed, God's everlasting purpose of mercy and love toward me and to all that love him, would be defeated. No! let me have my sorrows, they are my treasures; give me all my share. I "glory in tribulations."

It is easy to see how bereavement, or any other affliction that merely distresses our feelings, may be for our own good at least. Most of us have experienced the softening and subduing influences of adversity, in some of its many shapes. We know how it humbles, how it weans from the world, how it stifles our carnal affections, and quickens our spiritual appetites. But can we go so far as to say that temptation and sin are among the "all things" that work together for good? Temptation resisted is an enemy overcome; and is there no glory in triumph? He who resists sin fights the battles of the Lord; is there no reward for valor? no laurel for the victor? Yea, blessed is he that overcometh! The voice of the glorified Jesus comes to us from across the sea, and from over the centuries, which said on Patmos, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." "And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The reward of overcoming is such as no man can know. Its

glory cannot be communicated or told. The secret is with them that overcome to the end. This is the sublime secret of eternity. Oh, they that hold the white stone with the new name written on it,—they know!

Yes, and this, at least, we may know, that temptations overcome, work together, with all other things, for good. It was by triumph over temptation that our Saviour ascended to his heavenly throne, and by the same triumph we shall be led to the same exaltation. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

We can readily see how temptation may be included among the things that work for good. Can we go still farther and say that sin itself may work for good? If there were no evil, there could be no temptation. We have seen that temptation is the occasion of good; now if evil is the occasion of temptation, then with only one remove back of the result, evil is the occasion of good. Nor need it surprise us. No matter how refractory sin may be, God Almighty has power enough to harness it, and make it work, and work to purpose, and to good purpose. Nor are we without Scriptural instruction on this point. "Surely," says the Psalmist, "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Sin is not intended to praise God, but God overrules it to the opposite of its intention; and with the remainder of sin out of which praise is not directly brought, God girds himself to the strengthening of his mighty arm for the overthrow of them that hate him, and thus at last there is glory. It is said of Pharoah: "For this cause have I raised thee up; for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." The iniquity of the merciless king was so wrested by almighty power from the purpose for which Satan would have used it, that it became part of the sys-

tem by which all things work together for good. No doubt the Evil One, when he first seduced our parents to sin, thought that he had thwarted the purpose of God, and that he would soon succeed in subverting his kingdom. How little he thought that in the introduction of sin, he was preparing the way for a Saviour, and that what he intended for the dishonor of God would bring about, in the plan of salvation, the most magnificent exhibition of God's honor, and the most excellent majesty that the universe ever beheld! Until sin entered into the world, the universe never knew what a God God is; the inner glories of Godhead were not unfolded, the depth of his love and the power of his might were undisplayed. All knew that he could create millions of splendid worlds, and people them with glorious intelligences; but they did not know, that even Omnipotence, tied as it is to infinite justice, could rescue a damned world. Satan has discovered, to his chagrin, that what he intended as an interruption and frustration of God's goodness was one of the very things that God had determined beforehand should work together with everything else for good to them that love him.

It is indeed astounding that God can and does bring good out of evil; still when the thought is expressed in general terms, and when such plain examples of it are before our eyes, it is easy to acquiesce in it. But suppose some believer should ask: "If I have committed sin, can that be for my good?" The question is startling, and the answer may be more so. Whatever God can do in general he can do in particular. If he can bring good out of evil, taking it in its entirety, he can bring good out of evil, taking it by piecemeal. Not that there is anything right in what is wrong, not that, so far as we are concerned, there is anything good in that which is bad, not that sin is the *cause* of blessing, but that it certainly may be the *occasion* of it. Not that we should continue in sin that grace may abound, but that

where sin *does* abound grace does much *more* abound. There is nothing that can be construed into a license to sin, nor do they who love God desire any such license, nor would they avail themselves of it, if it existed; nor do they even desire an excuse for sin; it is sweeter far to confess all, and to confess too that sin admits of no excuse. Yet if there were no sin, there could be no forgiveness; if there were nothing to be saved from, there could be no salvation. Did sin occasion the atonement? Then my sin was part of that occasion. O Lord Jesus, did my sin bring salvation down? Did my sin pierce thy side? Then surely thou hast died for me! Then let me live and die for thee!

We are not the first who have experienced these emotions; and among them the Scriptures furnish some striking examples. Who was it that wrote, as it were, with tears of blood, the Fifty-first Psalm? But for the awful crime of David, almost unparalleled for meanness and baseness, that lowest depth of human penitence would not have been reached, nor that amazing forgiveness ever attained; nor would the saints, till the end of time, have found those inspired expressions in which to pour out the agony of their own contrition. Who was it among the apostles who was foremost, and whose preaching, so far as we learn from the record, was attended with the most power? The very one who basely denied his Lord, and perjured his soul! Who was afterwards raised up by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and to become the author of a large part of the New Testament, and the great formulator of the Christian system? None other than Saul of Tarsus, whose breath was full of slaughter. Doubtless, these men acquired, in their days of guilt, an experience which, in after life, greatly humbled their souls, mellowed their hearts, enriched their knowledge, and inflamed their zeal. If the law was their school-master, to bring them to Christ, doubtless their violations of that law brought them

to a richer experience of grace than would otherwise have been possible. Perhaps nothing but a remembrance of forgiven sin, such as none *but* Peter *could* have, would have emboldened any one to face the Jews as he did, and where he did, and charge them with the murder of the Lord of life. Had it not been for his memorable sin, perhaps no other recollection would have stung and quickened him to such discharge of duty, and consequently the three thousand souls converted under his unflinching testimony would not now shine as gems in his crown of rejoicing. Doubtless the very sin for which he wept so bitterly has been made, by a kind of spiritual reaction, to work for the actual promotion of his own happiness. How great a God is our God! If Saul had not been a persecutor, Paul would not have been the hero of heroes, whose record is unapproached in the history of mankind. The Lord allowed Satan to dash him down, that he, the Lord, might lift him up.

Our doctrine is most distinctly taught by our Saviour himself. On one occasion, he said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little"; and when Simon, in answer to a question from him, said that he to whom most was forgiven would love most, the Lord replied, "Thou hast rightly judged." Now, to love God most is the highest distinction and delight that any created being can enjoy. So if I am the chief of sinners, thank God that when my sin is all forgiven, I may be the chief of lovers! If I exceed all others in guilt, it may be that in the eternal anthems of heaven there will be one voice ringing clear and loud above all the rest, and that voice may be mine! O my God, if I have been the chief of sinners, let me be the loudest in my acclamations of praise! Nor is there any temptation to sin for the gentle saint, whose life from the beginning has been one of exceptional purity. Such an one is deaf to all invitations to sin; sin is his soul's abhorrence, and he would rather be the

least, the *very* least in the kingdom of heaven, than to win distinction at the expense of his heart's repose, and of his Lord's displeasure. As for the wicked who, instructed by the Lord, becomes more wicked thereby, he illustrates in himself that the savor of life unto life with some is a savor of death unto death with *him*. But that saint whose former days were days of enormous guilt, whose conscience stings him with the remembrance of capital crimes against the Lord of glory, may well thank God, and take courage! Well may he say, "Good Lord, I hate the sin, I loathe myself, but I magnify the grace that makes the wrath of man to praise thee, and all things to work together for good to them that love thee! Bless the Lord, O my soul! Bless the Lord, all ye his saints! All ye that love the Lord, bless his holy name!"

Is it objected to the doctrine taught, that it promises higher rewards to those who have sinned, and been forgiven, than to those who never sinned? If the doctrine is Scriptural, it matters not what the objections to it may be. A magnificent illustration of the doctrine is found in those passages of Scripture, not a few, which teach that the saints outrank the angels.<sup>1</sup> Every one of the saints has been a sinner; not one of the angels now in heaven has ever sinned. Those sinners, once lost, but now saved, will hold higher seats in bliss and glory than those sinless ones who were never lost, and therefore never saved. The saints are the one; the angels, the ninety and nine. But for sin there would have been no Christ; and none would have been joint-heirs with Christ, and none would have been one with Christ.

<sup>1</sup> "Know ye not that we shall judge the angels," 1 Cor. vi. 2., is to our purpose, but is not relied on, because the interpretation which I would give it, and which I think is the proper one, has been disputed by wise and learned men, though it is sustained by others as wise and as learned. We can easily afford to dispense with it as a proof-text.

All this is true of the saints once sinners, but not of the angels. The glory of the Lord is in the rescue. The Lord is a man of war. The saints are his trophies; the angels are not. Nor need we be surprised. Sin is the weapon with which Satan would destroy us. Is it surprising that God should wrench it out of his hand, and increase his damnation with it, and bring good out of it for them for whom Christ died? As he has undertaken our rescue, would it not be far more surprising if he should *not* do this very thing? We rejoice to know that there is power enough in heaven to capture the artillery of hell, and turn it against the Evil One, and promote with it the very cause which he used it to destroy. Does any one take encouragement to sin from this? He may insult Jehovah, if he will. The Scriptures never teach that it is right to do evil that good may come; but the doctrine of the whole book is, that God is glorified in salvation. But for sin there would have been no salvation; and thus God brings highest glory from lowest depths.

Instructive and thrilling as are the truths we have been considering, we have not exhausted the text, though, indeed, it has exhausted us. But we cannot let go the theme till we speak of God's wisdom. What infinite wisdom is that which contrived and arranged beforehand, from eternity, that everything, great and small, should so work with every other thing, that from everlasting to everlasting there should be one continuous frame-work, jointed and fitted together in perfection. We cannot but speak, too, of God's power; for what almightiness, such as we can form no conception of, would be required to coerce all things, however antagonistic, mind and matter, joy and sorrow, sin and holiness, to work *together*! Above all must we pause to adore, when we think of God's goodness. His wisdom and power have devised and set in operation this stupendous system, that it may expend its inconceivable and myriad energies in working good for

them that love him. What a wonderful reward for but a reasonable service!

If there be a controlling attribute in the nature of God, it would seem that that attribute is love. At any rate, so long as this is part of his perfection, so long must all the powers of his universe be brought to bear upon his cherished scheme, his grand purpose, the good of them that love him. As this has been his purpose from everlasting, so it must be to everlasting; for with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. So sure, then, my brethren, as you are that your hearts are warm towards God, just so sure you may be that all things work together for your good. His word, and the reason he has given you, enlightened by that word, unite in teaching this lesson. It is your privilege to be reminded of it by everything that comes within the scope of your perceptions. As you read the word of God, remember that every truth on the sacred page is revealed for your good. As you walk at midday, remember that the sun shines for your good. If you lift your eyes to the starry dome that gladdens night, remember that not a world rolls through space but is on a mission of love; its errand, as it blazes and whirls through its orbit, being to work with all other worlds, and all other things, for your good. Not an atom of matter exists, but exists for your good. The invisible animalcule lives for a purpose—your good. The ocean rolls, and ebbs, and flows, for your good. The storm, the calm, the wind, the zephyr, are for your good. The terrific powers of the earthquake and of the volcano, are for your good. The fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, have their being for your good. The flowers of the vale wear their tints, the trees of the forest their leafy honors, for your good. The stalactite gleams in the cavern, the mountain top greets the dawn, for your good. All, all that you see, and hear, and feel, and know, all that there is of nature, is for your good.



So, also, the providential dispensations that hourly, and every moment, occur, are for your good. Joy, sorrow, prosperity, adversity, disease, pain, death, all work together for your good. Commercial disasters, national calamities, are for your good. Even war, with its carnage, and its horror, and its awful guilt, is not out of reach of the power that makes all things work together for good. Temptation is for your good. The powers of darkness are for your good. The devil and his angels expend their strength in working for your good; God knows how to put them in harness. Your own sins, which your souls abhor, and the least one of which involves guilt enough to ruin you forever, are so reversed in their operation by the almightiness and mercy of God, that even they work for your good. Not a glorified spirit, nor a created intelligence, but lives for your good. Every energy, conceivable or inconceivable, that ever did or ever will exist, is united with every other energy, in working out one grand result—your good. Everything that God has ever done, or ever will do, must bear actually and practically on your happiness. We sink under the pressure of the thought; it overwhelms us; it is as if the great mountain, the mountain of his holiness, had been heaped upon us; we are in the dust; we fall at his feet as dead. But we shall rise. He will lay his right hand upon us, saying, “Fear not: I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Revived by his words, invigorated for eternal life by his touch, we shall rise, with capacity to realize forever that “ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD.”

## SERMON XVIII.

### *THE GREAT PURCHASE.*

“Ye are bought with a price.”—1 CORINTHIANS vi. 20.

THE earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.” Thus said David three thousand years ago; and ten centuries and more afterwards the Apostle Paul, in writing the very epistle from which our text is taken, quotes the expression twice: “The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.” The same is true of the sun and moon, and of all the planets and stars, and of all their inhabitants. One ever-living, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God, is the Lord Proprietor of them all. Creatorship necessitates proprietorship—proprietorship absolute; proprietorship unqualified and unqualifiable forever. If the sea is his because he *made* it, so we are his because he made *us*. His ownership of the loftiest angel and of *all* the angels, and of all glorious intelligences, and spiritual as well as corporeal beings, including ourselves, is as real, and as entire, and as absolute, as his ownership of the merest insect or of the merest atom. If a man with his own means builds two houses, one large and costly, and the other small and cheap, his ownership of the large house is just as complete as that of the small one. So all the products of God's creation, whether matter or spirit or compound, are on an exact level with all others, so far as the idea of property is involved. God brought us out of nothing, he can return us to nothingness at his will; there is none to dispute his title; and we belong to him; we are his, absolutely and forever.

Yet, the text says that we are "bought," and distinctly implies that God is the buyer. This cannot be literally true, for we are his already. One cannot buy that which is his own. The very idea of buying involves the idea of transfer of ownership. This is impossible in the present case, because there is no party *from* whom the transfer could proceed; for one cannot transfer to himself. Evidently the text is not true in any literal sense; yet it is a part of the word of God, and therefore must be true—*precisely* true in some sense; and from this we learn with certainty that it is a figure of speech. But all figures are intended to illustrate facts, otherwise they would not be figures; they would be simply meaningless fancies. But *why* are figures used? Why is not the fact stated literally and described exactly as it is? Because our minds are so constituted that a figure of speech often conveys a thought with more clearness, and with more force, than any literal statement could do. *This* figure is used in *this* case because it conveys the idea intended to be conveyed, better than it could be done in any other way.

But what *is* the fact, or what *are* the facts which this figure is intended to illustrate? We certainly learn this at least, that there *is* a sense in which we are "bought," and that therefore we belong to God *now* in a manner in which we once did not; we are bound to him by a new tie; hence we are not only *his*, but *doubly* his; we were always his by creation, we are now his by purchase.

The object of the text is to illustrate the plan of salvation under the figure of a commercial transaction. The analysis of any case of bargain and sale will therefore be virtually an analysis of the subject. In every transaction of this kind, certain elements are necessarily involved. There must be—

1. A buyer. 2. A thing bought and sold. 3. A seller.
4. A price paid. 5. A motive on the part of the buyer.
6. A motive on the part of the seller. 7. And from these

facts two inquiries naturally arise: 1. Was it a good bargain to the buyer? 2. Was it a good bargain to the seller?

In considering these points with regard to their application to the subject matter which was in the apostle's mind when he wrote these words, "Ye are bought with a price," we shall find one of the most luminous exhibitions of the plan of salvation to be found anywhere in the Sacred Scriptures.

I. Let us inquire, in the first place, who is the purchaser? Evidently God is represented as being the purchaser. After the purchase is made, and the title transferred, we are said to be both body and spirit *God's*.<sup>1</sup> It is needless to dwell on this point, further than to say that as we are now his by purchase, there is a new relation between us, which, like all other relations, must give rise to obligations of its own.

II. Passing to the second point, let us ask, what is the thing exchanged? On this point there ought to be no doubt. When we come to consider the price that was paid, we shall find that it was enormous. A disbursement so immense would not be made without a most definite understanding as to that which was to be received in return for the outlay. A draft that would seem to reach to the very bottom of the treasury would not be allowed for any dubious or uncertain equivalent. Persons seem to have been purchased. Who are these persons? The apostle says, *ye* are bought. Those whom he addressed were those who were bought. But whom did he address? To use his own words, he addressed "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ

<sup>1</sup>The Revised Version gives the text as follows: "Ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body," omitting the words, "and in your spirit, which are God's." I use the text as I find it in the Common Version; for whether the words omitted by the revisers are part of the true text or not, the thought which they express is abundantly sustained by Scripture.

our Lord" (ch. I, v. 1). Elsewhere he calls them "brethren"; and in the chapter from which the text is taken, he describes them as having been once unrighteous, but now washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our Lord (v. 11). Evidently the apostle addresses God's elect—not only those in Corinth, but all those in every place throughout the world in all time who can properly be called the people of God; and it is equally plain that he addresses none but these. If he had been addressing the whole world, he would not have used epithets of limitation; he would not have described his audience as "called to be saints," and as "brethren," and as those who are "washed," "sanctified," and "justified." The expression is a very definite one, and can mean neither more nor less than it says: "*Ye* are bought with a price." The expression of one thing is the exclusion of others. The word "*ye*" describes those who are meant, and *all* who are meant. It is none other than God's elect of whom it is said that they are bought with a price. These constitute the commodity which is the subject of the present transaction; and God, as already seen, is the buyer.

Now a wise buyer always selects that which he buys, and selects it judiciously. In fact any kind of a buyer, even the most thoughtless, would exercise some selection and *some* judgment in the disbursement of his funds. None but an idiot would rush into market with his hands full of money, shouting, "I want to buy something," and finally closing a bargain without knowing, thinking, or caring what he had bargained for, either as to quantity, quality, or kind. Such a transaction as bargain and sale always implies a certain amount of thought and of forethought; a certain deliberateness of purpose; a certain amount of discrimination and judgment, and a certain definiteness of intention—especially is this the case when the price to be paid is large. No man

does such a thing blindly or carelessly; nor is it matter of mere accident what he buys, or what he pays for it; of course all is calculated, and calculated coolly and beforehand. And the more wise the buyer is the more certain we may be that he "knows what he is about," and that his intentions were well formed and his calculations exactly made. In the present instance the buyer is governed by infinite wisdom and infinite knowledge, and is One also who, having eternity to operate in, has no occasion to be in a hurry or to act rashly. Of course, his purpose in this transaction was well defined and marked by infinite exactness. We must remember that *all* his conceptions, of *whatever* kind, are equal, if possible superior, in precision to our conceptions in purest mathematics. Even moral truth to him is as pure mathematics to us. So of course he knew exactly what he intended to buy. All that has been said is corroborated by what is known among us as the common law, which is said to be the perfection of reason. By the common law, a sale cannot take place without involving two points, to wit: 1. There must be a mutual and clear understanding as to the price to be paid. 2. There must be a mutual and clear understanding as to the exact equivalent that is to be rendered in consideration of that price. There is but one law for vendor and vendee alike; and anything that claims to be a sale, and which is defective in either point, is *no* sale; and if claim of sale were pressed despite such defect, it would raise suspicion of fraud. There is no fraud in heaven. The divine record declares that there was a sale; and in heaven nothing pretends to be a sale which is not a sale.<sup>1</sup> When we were bought with a price, the deed was marked by all the features

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that this is a figure of speech. Using literal terms, we should say, that there was a genuine transaction represented to us as a sale. As this is an inspired figure, it is the best figure, and conveys the idea to our minds better than it could have been done in any other way.

which make such a transaction legitimate and proper. Our Heavenly Father then knew exactly what he intended to purchase; and I may add that he knew also when the bargain was closed exactly what he *did* purchase, and he knew that that which he *did* corresponded to what he *intended* to do. A prudent purchaser always sees that he gets what he pays for. It is the custom of merchants to compare the goods delivered with the invoice, and to check off each article separately, until the list is exhausted. We may be sure that in point of prudence, and exact correctness of dealing, God is not excelled by any of his creatures, and when those whom he has "bought with a price" are checked off, the work will be rightly done; for the checking off in this case is nothing more, rather let me say nothing less, than an operation of the divine mind; and the objects of the purchase are ever before the divine mind.

Men may take all pains to attain to exact correctness, and after all be mistaken. But such exact correctness in this case is just as certain as that God is perfect and infinite. We know that he counts the hairs of our heads. It is not to be supposed that he would put himself in the strange attitude of counting the hairs and not counting the *heads*. Would the divine attention be so occupied with the minute interests of a single hair that he would forget all the rest of the man? Would he guard with eternal vigilance the most insignificant part of the man and lose sight of the man himself? Impossible and unthinkable.

Furthermore: A human purchaser is not satisfied with merely counting the articles delivered, to see if the *number* is right, but will examine *each* one to see if it is *the* one selected by him, when the purchase was made. Thus if one has bought a hundred horses, it will not suffice when the animals are delivered to *count* them and see that there are a hundred. The most reckless buyer would not be satisfied with this.

He would wish to make himself sure, not only that he had received the right *number*, but that he had received the right *ones*. We may be sure that he who bought *us* with a price knew not only how *many* of us he bought, but *which* of us. God's attention goes farther into details than ours. And he will examine each one all over, inside and out, with infinite scrutiny, counting every hair on him and every atom in his whole make up, physical and spiritual.

And again: An honest buyer takes no more than he pays for. If he finds that by accident or otherwise, goods have been delivered to him which he did not select and did not pay for, he will be sure not to appropriate those articles: he will publicly declare that they are none of his, and will return them to their rightful owner. We may be sure that God, in all his dealings, is infinitely just; and that he will take neither more nor less, by one iota or one atom, than the bargain calls for.

Men are more or less careful in such transactions in proportion to the value of the commodities dealt in. If the commodities are coarse, common, and cheap, a very great exactness is not observed; but if the commodities are very rare and precious, then the most scrupulous precision is observed. A few grains of corn might be missing from a hundred tons of corn, and the loss would not be noticed; but if a diamond as large as the Kohinoor were lost, it would raise prodigious consternation. In this case it is immortal souls that are bought with a price—souls in the image of God—souls that are “partakers of the divine nature,” and each one of them is of infinite value. If the world itself were a huge diamond, making all space resplendent with its flashes as it coursed over its orbit; and if its value were calculated by the rules of the jeweler,—it would be nothing, and less than nothing, to the value of one of those whom God bought with a price.



We may be sure that there are no mistakes in this transaction, and that the watchful eye of Omniscience has been fastened on it from eternity.

III. We come now to the consideration of the third point. In every such transaction there must be a *seller*. A most natural inquisitiveness prompts us to ask, Who is the seller? The laudable curiosity which makes the inquiry ought to be gratified; though without a little thought, the question is a puzzling one. The seller is the Law—God's holy Law. We must here presume a figure of speech—the figure of personification; a figure which speaks of *things* as if they were *persons*. Here it is the *Law* that is personified. There could have been no real person whose property we were, and who sold us to the glorious and eternal purchaser; and if no *real* person, then there must have been a figurative person; for in such a transaction as buying and selling, there must be two persons. A bargain requires two. God, we have already seen, is one of these persons. His Law, in a figure, is the other.

But how came we to be in the possession of the Law? By sin. We had not known sin but by the Law. When we transgressed it, we became amenable to its penalties. Being unable to satisfy its demands, it seized our persons as it were by writ of *capias*. The borrower is servant to the lender; the debtor is servant to the creditor. Our creditor is the divine Law. Its demands are infinite; not only our estate, but our very *persons*, are confiscated by its power. Admitting the Law to be a person, which it is in figure, then we belong to that person. It has control of us; it has possession of us; we are in its power and at its mercy. It has both the right and the power to dispose of us according to its own behests.

God is the purchaser; *we* are they who are bought with a price; and the Law is the seller, relinquishing its power over

us for a good and valuable consideration. When "sold under sin," we are conveyed, not by deed of gift, but by bill of sale. It is no part of God's plan that sinners shall be saved regardless of the claims of the divine Law. Those claims must be satisfied, and satisfied in full, with the precision of the Infinite. God's Law is as eternal and unchangeable as he is. It never could have given us up without receiving an equivalent. Nor would God be willing to defraud his own Law, by taking from it that which belongs to it, without a just compensation. God will not rob any; much less will he rob his own eternal Law, which is holy, just, and good. Hence we see the necessity of a purchase, or of something in the nature of a purchase, in the salvation of sinners; and hence, too, we see the beauty, and the appropriateness, and the force, and the amazing wisdom of the figure used by the apostle, when he says, "ye are bought with a price."

IV. We come now to consider the fourth point; that is, to consider the *price* that was paid. What was the price? It was the blood of Jesus. We are everywhere represented in the New Testament as those who are *redeemed*; that is, as those who are bought, and bought *back* to a former owner, like persons captured by a foreign power and held for a ransom. The blood of Jesus was our ransom-money; hence he is called our Redeemer, because he gave *himself* for *us*. The words "ransomed" and "redeemed" are evidently used to mean the same thing. Our Lord himself uses these words, which are recorded by Matthew (xx. 28): "The Son of man came to give his life a *ransom* for many." The evangelist Mark also records the same words (x. 28). The Apostle Peter (i. 1, 19) says that we are "redeemed" (that is, bought back) "with the precious blood of Christ," "as of a lamb without spot." And the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians (i. 7) uses these words: "In whom we have

*redemption* by his blood"; and in the Epistle to the Colossians (i. 14) the same apostle uses the very same words: "In whom we have *redemption* by his blood"; and in writing to the Galatians, he says: "Christ hath *redeemed* us from the curse of the law" (iii. 13). And in the Book of Acts, we find this very striking expression: "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own *blood*." And in the next chapter to that in which our text is found, the apostle repeats the very words of the text, saying again: "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vii. 23). And in the Book of Revelation, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders are represented as falling down before the Lamb, having harps and golden vials full of odors, and saying to the Lamb that sitteth on the throne: "Thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us to God by thy *blood* out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. v. 9). But without relying wholly on proof-texts, of which I have selected a few, it is note-worthy that the whole drift and tenor of the New Testament represent us as being ransomed, redeemed, bought back; and everywhere it is indicated, if not expressed, that the blood of Christ is the price that was paid. Nor is the figure of speech used in this morning's text—the figure of purchase and sale—a rare one, so seldom used that there is risk of misapplying it. On the contrary, so far is it from being rare, that it is used directly or indirectly times without number. Indeed, it is a favorite figure. Wherever Christ is spoken of as our Redeemer, wherever the word *redeemed* is used, or the word *redemption*, or the word *ransom*, the figure is referred to.

So, then, in considering the text, "Ye are bought with a price," we have learned four important things: it is God who buys, it is we who are bought, it is the Law personified who sells, and the blood of Christ is the price that is paid.

V. It is not improper for us now to inquire into the

motives of the high contracting parties to this transaction. In the first place, what was the motive of the buyer? The motives of all buyers are in general terms the same; that is, they pay out a certain amount of purchase money, because they wish to possess a certain object which cannot be lawfully obtained in any other way. In the present instance, God desired his people to sustain a certain relation to him, which they could not sustain except by the transaction which the text illustrates. We could not be *his* in the sense of being his *redeemed*, unless he had redeemed us; and to do this it was needful that a price be paid. But what was the motive that lay back of this motive which this glorious Purchaser had in common with other purchasers? Forever blessed are the words recorded in the third chapter of John and the sixteenth verse, where the depths of the divine bosom are laid bare, and the secrets of eternity are revealed: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is the mainspring of God's action. We may be sure that whatever machinery is set in motion by such a power as this will be certain to work out the very results that were intended. The salvation of the redeemed has its fountain-head, if the figure may be so suddenly changed, in eternal and infinite benevolence. This being one of the attributes of God, is coupled of course with eternal and infinite wisdom; and both are coupled with eternal and infinite power. In fact, all the attributes of God are coupled together; for our God is a personal God, and one God. Of course the results are as certain as the existence of God.

VI. Let us now ask what was the motive of the seller? All sellers have the same motive. They sell for gain. That which they receive is more valuable to them than that which they give in exchange for it. The Law—represented in all this discussion as a *person*—the Law saw that its claims

would be better satisfied by accepting the blood of Jesus, than by retaining the persons of transgressors. Among us always, if a man is incarcerated for debt, as was formerly done by law, it is better to take any payment rather than to retain him. But in the present case, the reason is stronger. The transgressors are finite, and the destruction of any number of them by the Law, would not be so great a tribute to the power, dignity, and majesty of the Law, as the yielding up to its claims of the infinite. The man Jesus was identified and unified in some mysterious and incomprehensible way, with the Second Person of the glorious Godhead, and this imparted to his blood an infinite dignity, and an infinite value. So it was to the interest of the Law, regarding it as a person, to accept the infinite in payment of the finite. There was profit in the transaction; and this was the motive of the seller.

VII. The inquiry now arises, whether it was a good bargain to both parties. We may be sure that it was. So far as the seller is concerned we have already seen that the exchange was profitable, and that the *amount* of profit is to be measured by the difference between the finite and infinite. So to the Law, the bargain was stupendously grand. We may be sure that the bargain was equally good on the other side; for Infinite Wisdom as a buyer would not give any more for a thing than it is worth. In all legitimate commercial transactions both parties are benefited. It is to the interest of the seller to sell, and it is to the interest of the buyer to buy. Thus commerce enriches mutually those who engage in it. If it were not so, if exchange could be made to the benefit of one party, only at the expense of the other, commerce must cease or the world would be ruined. But this transaction, between Almighty God on the one hand, and his most holy Law on the other, which was the first commercial transaction of eternity, must be a *model* transaction, in which not only

both parties were benefited, but benefited equally. In this sublime deed of eternity there must have been an exact adjustment of values, an absolute equipoise of advantage in the scales of infinite justice. Hence if the Law made a profit which is measured by the difference between the finite and infinite, the profit on the other side must have been commensurate with it. Thus did the plan of salvation transcendently promote the glory of God. Doubtless it looms up as one of the grandest events of eternity. When the world was created and God looked upon all the works that he had made and pronounced it good, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy ; but when the seventh seal was broken there was silence in heaven. Amazement struck the angels dumb.

VIII. It is natural and proper to ask, *When* did all these wonderful doings take place? The beginning of the delivery of the commodity purchased and paid for in blood was at the death of Abel, whose sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock was typical of the price that was paid for his ransom. Every day since then, the delivery has continued, and it will continue until the last one of those who were redeemed by the blood of Jesus has been delivered up to the Father. The delivery will not stop short of that point nor go beyond it.

The price was paid 1800 years ago. The first installment was paid in Gethsemane, when the blood gushed from the pores like sweat. The next installment was paid when the crown of thorns pierced the Godlike temples. The next was paid when the nails forced their way through the hands and feet. The last installment was paid when the Roman spear gashed open the heart. Head, hands, feet, and heart were laid open—the whole body of the Lord wounded, and hung up between heaven and earth, that streams of salvation might flow more freely ; and he was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement

of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

This was the fulfilling of the contract. But when was the contract made? Of course the whole figure is intended to represent certain operations of the divine mind; for no such deed as that spoken of could have taken place outside of him. God is eternal; God is unchangeable. The salvation of the redeemed—growing out of the exercise of his attributes—must have both its origin and its completion in the depths of the divine nature. The bargain by which the redeemed were bought and paid for, was made in eternity. So reason would teach; but what says the Scripture? The Apostle Peter says, "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." 1 Peter i. 19. In the Book of Revelation, too, we are told of "the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world." Of course it is not meant that the actual slaying was before the foundation of the world, but merely that then was the arrangement made, which culminated in the slaying. The price to be paid was thus agreed upon in eternity; and of course that which was to be given in exchange for this price was also agreed on in eternity. The understanding was not all on one side, but was perfect on both sides. What was to be paid, and what was to be given as equivalent, were both settled questions long ago. As to this last point, it is represented under the figure of having been recorded in a book. The very names of those who are bought and paid for to the uttermost farthing are written in the Lamb's book of life; and every one of those whose names are so written, and whom the record shows to have been bargained for and sold, will be sure to be delivered up into the hands of the Father. We are also distinctly informed that "whosoever was *not* found written in the

book of life was cast into the lake of fire"; and from this we learn that some names are written in that book and some are not. Rev. xx. 15. Thus the archives of eternity will forever witness the terms of the contract, by virtue of which God's chosen ones are redeemed. On one side of that book is written the price that was paid, even the precious blood of Christ; and on the other side, to make an exact balance of the account, are written the names of those who were "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4; and this last passage teaches us three things:

1. That we were chosen.

2. That we were chosen *in him*, that is, with reference to him; that is, that the thing bought and the price paid for it were compared with each other; and

3. That the choice was made and the arrangement agreed on before the foundation of the world. What else can the text mean? Parallel with this is the passage in 2 Thess. ii. 13, where the inspired apostle says, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath *from the beginning* chosen you to salvation." Here again the "*choice*" is mentioned, and also the *date* of it, "from the beginning"; then, too, was the whole transaction, including a complete catalogue of the names committed to the record in the book of life.

#### REFLECTIONS.

From all that has been said there arise various profitable reflections:

1. We learn the value that God sets upon human souls, by the price that he paid for them. We underrate our own importance. We must be worth more than we suppose ourselves to be, otherwise we should not have been the subjects of that stupendous negotiation, in which such a huge draft was made on the treasury of the Almighty. If God



so values us, then how ought we to value ourselves and each other?

2. Now that we have been bought and paid for at such a price, the Purchaser will be sure to take care of us; nor will he let any pluck us out of his hand. A man who purchases an article of immense value is sure to put it in a safe place, and will exhaust all ingenuity in precaution against robbery or loss. And the anxiety and energy with which we secure our goods is always in proportion to their value. Suppose a man has so set his heart on the possession of a certain thing that he is willing to pay his son's life-blood for it, and actually bargains for it at that rate, and actually pays the stipulated price. He sees the blood gush from the vitals; he sees it burst from the pores; he sees it ooze from nail prints; he sees it trickle from temples down the face in which he recognizes his own features and his own likeness in the midst of the agony; he hears the dying cry, and recognizes, alas too well, the voice; he sees the heart send out its final flood, and hears the last gurgle as the fountain is exhausted; and then, taking the cold, bloodless clay, he lays it in the tomb and receives in exchange that which he paid for at this fearful price. Think you he could ever lose it? Would he not guard it with ceaseless vigilance day and night? With what fierce jealousy would he watch it—with what desperation would he defend it! Would he not inclose it in the strongest chest with walls, and ribs, and bolts, and bars, of steel and adamant and asbestos, that would defy the burglary of the pit and also its flames?

God's feelings are as much stronger than ours as he is greater than we are. The subjects of his eternal purchase, paid for with the blood of his Son, his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased, he will not suffer to be lost. God can find no place outside himself safe enough to make us secure, and so he has taken us into himself. Says an apostle, "Your

life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). God has hidden us—hidden us in himself. He has opened his own bosom and received us in, and there with Christ we are shut up, and the everlasting arms of Omnipotence are locked around us, while the blazing intelligence of Godhead to eternity watches over us, prompted by amazing, fathomless, infinite love! No, not one of them will be lost.

3. We learn also something of our wealth, and of the treasures that are in store for us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). In another place the apostle says: "All things are yours" (2 Cor. iii. 21). And in still another place he says: "All things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). Would it be possible to exaggerate the intensity of these expressions, or to make them mean more than they do mean?

4. We learn also the rank which we shall hold in heaven. The angels were not bought; we are. Hence we outrank them and shall sit on thrones to judge them.

5. In striking contrast with this view of our exaltation we are brought to a wonderful sense of our helplessness. If we were bought, then in that event at least we were mere merchandise. We were transferred like chattels. We had nothing to do with it; nor could we have had, for this reason, if for no other, that it was done in eternity. Nor yet could it have been done on the ground of any good foreseen in us, for that could not have been foreseen which does not exist.

6. If a purchase was made, it was necessary that it should have been made. Nothing is ever paid out for that which can be had gratis; and especially such a price as this would not have been paid out for nothing. And if such negotiation was necessary, then God only could have made it, for he only could pay the price. So we see that salvation is all of

grace. Christ, too, must have been something more than man. Nothing short of indwelling divinity would have so enriched his blood as to make it adequate to satisfy the demands of infinite, eternal and inexorable Law. So again we see that salvation is of the Lord.

#### A FALSE INFERENCE.

Many persons have followed all this argument down to the last of these corollaries, and then, alas, have drawn a false conclusion. They say: "If all this be so; if indeed we were bought in eternity; if the price has been paid and the holy Law of God has relinquished all its claims upon us; and if God has accepted us as his own and has pledged all his attributes for our eternal safety,—then we need have no anxiety, and there is nothing left for us to do." It is true that we need have no anxiety, but it is not true that we have no duty. "Why," says human nature, "why should we feel any solicitude for ourselves or for others? Is not the affair settled? Was not each particular case settled before the foundation of the world? If so, there is nothing for us to do; and whatever we do, the result will be the same."

I think I could show that all this is illogical, but I can do better than that; I can show that it is *unscriptural*. Nor do I have to go far in Scripture to find what I want. "Ye are bought with a price," is the text. The very next word after the word *price* is the word *therefore*. What office does the word *therefore* perform? Of course it introduces the conclusion which the apostle draws from what has just been said. What conclusion is that? I read the whole verse: "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." Is there nothing claimed? Nay, rather, everything is claimed. The entire man, soul and body, is claimed. All the powers physical, all the energies intellectual, all the affections emotional, are

summoned, not to indolence but to activity. All that there is of manhood is required to glorify God. Can this be done by listlessness and inaction? A clod of earth, mere insensate matter, may glorify God by perpetual inertia; but a living, thinking being, an organism of energies, can glorify him only by action, action, action. "Ye are bought with a price, *therefore* glorify God." This is apostolic logic, rather divine logic, almighty logic, which rushes over and overwhelms the sophistry of fatalism.

Nor is it *duty* only, that is, *mere* duty and nothing more, to glorify God. If it were *not* duty, it is a glorious privilege! What! is it possible that we can glorify God? Such creatures as we? And can we glorify him in our *bodies* which are clay? And in our spirits which are all defiled by sin?

Yes, we glorify God in our bodies, when we use them as they were intended to be used, without abusing them. Everything that fills its destiny glorifies God. Cleanliness, chastity, personal purity, glorifies God. 'Tis pure religion to keep ourselves unspotted. Manual labor glorifies God. Let the hand do with its might what it finds to do, and God is glorified thereby.

Physical enjoyment, when rational and lawful, glorifies God. Whatever we do, whether we eat, or drink, or wake, or sleep, *all* may be done to the glory of God; and if all *may* be, then it *ought* to be. Let us thank God that he takes delight even in our enjoyments and recreations, and that even in our sleep we may glorify him, by gathering strength with which to serve him for another day. Oh, the joy of life! Oh, the rapture of living when every act, and every breath, waking or sleeping, glorifies God!

We may also glorify God in our spirits, vile as our spirits are, by faith in his word, and by faith in his Son; by an inner life of devout meditations and holy desires, and by a consecrated heart filled with love.

## FINALLY.

If we glorify God in our bodies he will glorify us in our bodies, and will raise us up in the last day, like unto his glorious body who died for us and gave himself for us, and who now sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

And if we glorify him in spirit he will also glorify us in spirit, and will conform us to the image of his Son.

Then shall the work of redemption be complete, when all of God's elect shall be delivered up to the Father in consideration of the ransom price that was paid; and an eternity of joy will be before them.

In view of the whole subject, we have ground for rejoicing that our salvation is made secure by the terms of an eternal compact, for the Law having accepted the price, can never claim us more; and for gratitude unutterable to him who, so far as we know or believe, has done more for us than for any other of his creatures; and for holy exultation for this, that we are placed in such a position that angels and archangels look up to us rather than down upon us, regarding us, doubtless, as the most wonderful beings in all the creation of God, anomalous, peerless; and for humility profound and overwhelming, for it is from rags and wretchedness and pollution that we are lifted to this high estate; and for devout consecration to him who gave his life for ours, and paid for us in his own blood, and who has a right to our lives, our labors, our affections, and our all; and for amazement beyond measure at the wonders of redemption; and for enthusiasm, admiring, loving, rapturous, kindled to seraphic ardor, and bursting into flame in view of the splendor and grandeur of the disclosures of wisdom, power, and love in "the glorious gospel of the blessed God!" Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen and Amen!

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The foregoing sermon has been publicly spoken of as presenting what is technically known as the "Commercial View of the Atonement," the doctrine of which view is, that we were indebted to the Almighty to a certain and definite extent, and that Christ paid the debt, giving so much for so much, and thus set us free from further demand. I have to say: 1. That the sermon does not treat of the atonement *at all*; it treats of redemption, which is a different thing. 2. That a sermon from me on the atonement would *not* advocate the commercial view. It is true that what debts we owe, Christ has paid; but he has done vastly more than this: he has purchased our *persons*. He has indeed obtained pardon for us—official exemption from penalty; besides this, he has procured forgiveness for us—personal restoration to favor; he intercedes for us; he has unified himself with us; he has made us "sons of God," and "joint-heirs" with himself; he has prepared a place for us; he has sent the Holy Spirit to instruct us, to comfort us, to *sanctify* us, so that we shall be prepared for the place which is prepared for us. Surely, all this is far more than merely putting us in the position of discharged debtors.

The present sermon is intended to be an expansion of the apostle's thought when he referred to the plan of salvation under the figure of a purchase and sale. In this transaction, there is only one real Person, namely, God in the second Person of the Trinity; the other party to what is represented as a bargain is only a figurative person—the Law. The figure, happily chosen, shows how our relations to God, and to the Law, are changed by the work of Christ, and gives us, perhaps, a clearer insight than any other figure, into the plan whereby sinners are saved. In our Saviour's memorable prayer he says: "Thine they were, and thou *gavest* them me." Here there were two actual persons, the Father and the Son. Those who constitute the *gift*, in one case, are the same as those who are *purchased* in the other—the elect. The word *gave* is as really a figure of speech as the word *bought*, for whatever is the Father's is the Son's, and whatever is the Son's is the Father's, and this has been so from eternity. The two passages, one speaking of us as a gift, and the other speaking of us as a purchase, are used to present different phases of that mysterious transaction of the divine mind, whose result is the salvation of sinners. All language which speaks of the mental operations of the Infinite One must be figurative; and all our conceptions of the same must be inadequate. Something of what Jesus Christ did in person, we know; but of the activities of the divine mind in eternity, we know vastly less. Still, revelation, as much as we can bear, has been made. The gift lets in light on the subject from one side; the purchase lets in light from another side.

It may aid our conceptions a little to say, that Christ received us from the Father as a gift, and from the Law as a purchase. All who were given were purchased, and none others were purchased. All who were purchased were given, and none others were given. Both figures illustrate the same *res gesta*, but in different aspects. In the case of the gift, the donor and donee knew who were given and received, as definitely as, in the case of the purchase, those who were bought and sold were known by the vendor and vendee; and in neither case was anything done in ignorance, nor without eternal premeditation. All who were both given and bought will certainly be saved; no others will be, or can be. At any rate, both figures are Scriptural, both were given for our instruction, and from both we learn much to enlighten our minds, to invigorate our faith, to brighten our hopes, and to warm our love.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!  
What more can he say, than to you he hath said,  
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

## SERMON XIX.

### *THE USES, BEAUTIES, AND SYMBOLICAL TEACHINGS OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.*

“As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”—GALATIANS iii. 27.

IT is the duty of all who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love him in sincerity, to confess him publicly before the world. I might show that this is so from the word of God, or I might show it on rational grounds. I might urge, among other reasons, that, without this public confession, one could not exert that influence which he owes to the cause of his Saviour and his God. I will not dwell on this point, but will suppose it to be conceded, that those who really do believe in Jesus Christ, and are willing to serve him with singleness of heart, ought to make the fact known.

There are various ways in which this publication might be made. It might be made in some cases through the newspapers. One might make it known by oral communication to each of his friends individually; or he might announce the fact, either in person or by proxy, on one or more occasions, before some popular assembly; or it might, perhaps, be made known in the course of a long time, by a devout and Christian life, without any express declaration of change.

If it should so happen, that of all the various ways of making the fact known, there should be one which reason would lead us to believe *better* than any other, it would be our duty to adopt that way. The best way, is the one which the Christian ought always to choose. If it should so be, that



God has *prescribed* a particular way of doing it, we may be sure that *that* is the best way, and we are bound to adopt it for a double reason: First, because it is the best way; and second, because God has prescribed it, either of which would be sufficient without the other; but if both exist together, the obligation would seem to be, in some sense at least, of double force. If, in addition to all this, the Lord had shown us *why* it is a more excellent way, the obligation to adopt it would be, if possible, stronger still; for in this case, our reason, as well as our conscience, and our allegiance to God, would each be separately appealed to. We are bound to do it as God's creatures, because he has commanded it; as moral beings, because our moral sense requires it; and as intellectual beings, because our reason approves it.

The ordinance of baptism is the method of publishing faith in Jesus Christ which has been selected by Infinite Wisdom, and enjoined by the Almighty on all his people. "*Thus*," said our Saviour, "*thus* it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." "*Thus*," that is, *in this manner*. What he was then doing, it becomes all his people to do. He was submitting to the ordinance of baptism, and his people "*thus*," that is, in the *same way*, should fulfill their righteous obligations to God. It is worthy of remark, that the first precept in the New Testament which enjoins baptism, should be a precept embodied in an example; as if our Lord, to guard against misconstruction of his language, had himself performed the *act* designated in the precept. "*Thus*," then, is not a mere expletive, but becomes a word of some meaning; it is at once descriptive and preceptive, and is of binding authority; for the Lord hath said it. Those only *obey* who do "*thus*." In the commission which Christ gives to his ministers, he says: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We find that the apostles,

acting on this commission, always baptized persons as soon as they believed on Jesus Christ. The same duty is binding on us, whether we see the reasonableness of it or not. The express command of Jesus Christ is reason enough for the doing of anything, without inquiring further. We learn from the Scriptures, however, many important advantages which accrue from this particular way of publishing our faith in the gospel of Christ.

Baptism is a symbol addressed to the senses. As such it is much more impressive than any other expression of the truths it is designed to teach. We all know that impressions on the eye are stronger, and more lasting, and more instructive than those made on the ear. A lecture on chemistry, for example, however able and lucid it may be, conveys but little information to the minds of the hearers, unless accompanied by experiments; and even what knowledge it does convey is likely to be speedily forgotten. But let the actual experiment be performed before the eyes of the pupil, and he understands clearly and in a moment that which was but faintly comprehended before; and, having *seen* as well as heard, an indelible impression is made on his memory. It was doubtless in observance of this principle, that when our Saviour wished to inculcate a child-like spirit, not satisfied with merely stating the doctrine in the hearing of his disciples, "he called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." If the lesson had been addressed to the ear alone, they *might* have forgotten it. Doubtless thousands of the sayings of Jesus of Nazareth were forgotten by those who heard them, and this *might* have been one of the forgotten things. But they never could forget the scene, when Jesus took a little child, and set him in their midst, and they stood around, and the Saviour, perhaps laying his hand on the

head of the little one, said, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

All the doctrines taught by the ordinance of baptism are taught in the written and in the preached word. But this symbol preaches them over again, and in different kind of language—in the more impressive, if not more expressive, language of signs. Thus, if, in another ordinance, bread and wine are made preachers, and if, by the illustration of our Saviour, every little child is made a preacher, so also is baptism a preacher, commissioned of God and appointed by him to teach certain lessons of wisdom to his people. Every baptismal wave is eloquent with instruction.

Let us see what are some of these symbolical teachings, and thus we shall be able to appreciate the uses and beauties of this heaven-ordained institution.

1. Here is a washing—a total ablution of the whole body—in an element which possesses the delightful property of *cleansing*. It is what chemists call a universal solvent—an element under whose magic influence every kind of impurity is dissolved and passes away—an element whose touch makes clean. Inspired by the thought of purity, may I not wander a little from the subject of my discourse? How happy a thing it is that water has the power of *cleansing*! Doubtless every pious man, when he slakes his thirst with cool water, lifts his heart to God in thankfulness for that pure and delightful beverage which he has prepared to invigorate his creatures and beautify his footstool. But does it ever occur to us to thank God that he has given to this element the power of cleansing? Suppose it had not this power. It might still quench our thirst; but how soon would the world be involved in wretchedness and disease, and our abodes, our garments, and our bodies become objects of loathing! Or suppose that this cleansing, purifying element were rare, and

therefore costly, and inaccessible to many. Thank God that water cleanses, and that everybody can get it! The poor have access to it in abundance as well as the rich. Thank God for gushing springs, and cool wells, and purling streams, and mighty rivers, and broad oceans! The element of purity is the most abundant on earth. This fact itself preaches. Yes, bubbling brooks and the roar of old ocean, preach to men. Thank God for this mighty purifier and this mighty preacher! Two-thirds of a world full of water! And that the purifier itself may be kept pure, thank God he has prepared in the laboratory of nature the potent saline antiseptic, and hidden in it the caves of the deep, so that as the rivers return to the great reservoir whence they came, laden with the impurities of earth, they are divested of that burden by the great catharist, made pure, revived, and rejuvenated; and sent heavenward, as if to receive the finishing touch of purity, and descend to the earth in showers, washing the very air as they fall, (thank God for that!) refreshing the earth and gladdening the heart of man.

Pardon the episode. Yet perhaps it is not so great a digression from the subject of our discourse, for there is a propriety and a *beauty*, such as the taste of God approves, in the selection of this purifying, cleansing, refreshing, delightful element as the instrument of baptism. The preacher, of all others, should have clean hands and a pure heart. Water is a preacher, and is in its very essence, purity itself, and the agent of universal cleanliness.

But to return to the point. Here is a washing of the whole body in water. Yet it is a *religious* act. As such it must be for the benefit of the soul. Yet water cannot cleanse the soul, or even *touch* it. But the act symbolically teaches that the soul needs cleansing. It is a practical confession that the soul is defiled. It is saying to the world that without a washing, a *total* washing of *some* sort, the soul is unfit

for the kingdom of God, where all is immaculate. It is a washing of the *whole* body, which shows that the soul is stained *all over* with sin, and that no part of it is unpolluted. Let me not be satisfied with a symbol which shows that my soul is only spotted, as it were, with sin, and needs only a partial cleansing. No. If the symbol would express the sentiment of my heart, let it show that my whole soul is corrupt, and that there is no cleanness in it. Let it be a symbol which cannot be misunderstood. Let it be one, the meaning of which, in spite of the narrowest construction, will even yet be comprehensive enough to cover the whole ground. Such is baptism. As you see the candidate go down into the water, he proclaims by that act, before men, before angels, and before God, "Unclean, unclean, *all over*"! Here is a sermon, saints and sinners, which you may do well to listen to.

2. But this is not all—this is only the beginning. While the ordinance teaches that we *need* cleansing, it also teaches that we *are* cleansed. As one comes out of the water, by that act, he proclaims his belief that there *is* a fountain that cleanses from sin. His act is the echo of the sentiment of Zion's song :

There is a fountain filled with blood  
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
 Lose all their guilty stains.

Emerging from the wave washed all over with the emblem of purity, by the act itself, he says (and oh, how impressively!), "Not of myself can I be made clean; something *out* of myself, something extraneous from my soul as this water is from my person, must remove the stain of my sin." As this ablution of the body is copious enough to remove every impurity, leaving not a spot untouched, so the spiritual washing which it represents is ample enough to cleanse from

*all* sin, and to present the soul to God “without *spot*, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Oh! give me the symbol that teaches “that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin.” As I hope to be made *wholly* pure—as I hope to be one of the spirits of the just made *perfect*, give me a sign which will show that I am washed *all over* in the precious blood of the atonement. Let me not be satisfied with less than this. Let me have a symbol that will set forth, not only the truth, but the *whole* truth. If the thing signified be total cleansing, let the sign represent totality—let it indicate the glorious fact in all its plenitude. Let me have an ordinance that will sweetly harmonize with my feelings, when I say to my Saviour:

Plunge me in that sacred flood—  
 In that fountain of thy blood;  
 Then thy Father's eye shall see  
 Not a spot of guilt in me.

3. But more. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Thus baptism teaches not only that there is a cleansing, but that the death and resurrection of Christ are the *grounds* of it. Let me never see one buried and put out of sight beneath the wave, without remembering the lesson it so eloquently teaches, that the Lord of glory, whose throne is in the heavens, lay buried in the earth; that this humiliation was for me; and that *that* act was the finishing stroke in the work of atoning for my sin. Let me never see one emerge from the watery tomb without remembering that Christ is *risen*; that I have a *living* Saviour; that he who stood by the sepulchre and said “Mary,” calls me by name too; that he who died to save me lives to love me; that he

who shed his blood for me lives to plead its efficacy. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." But Christ *is* risen, and the act of emerging from the water is appointed by him to remind us of the fact. Thanks be to God for the glorious fact, and thanks for this visible remembrancer—this silent but impressive preacher of it!

4. But baptism teaches another lesson: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ." The expression, "as many of you as," is equivalent to the phrase, "all who." So then *all who* "have been baptized into Christ" are the persons of whom it is affirmed, that they have "put on Christ." What is meant by putting on Christ? It means to *clothe* oneself (using a strong figure) with the spirit and character of Christ, so as to present to all beholders nothing but a Christ-like appearance. It implies, then, that we are conformed to his image, totally consecrated to him, and united and identified with him. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" We are dead to the world—to all its cares, and business, and joy, and folly; dead to all but Christ. We are buried out of sight of the world; we thereby renounce the world. Hereafter we care nothing for it. It has no hold upon us. Christ is our all, and we are his. The world should have no more hold upon our affections than upon a dead man who has no affections. We rise to newness of life—to a new world, as it were, of which Christ is the centre and sum. You see one descend into the water. By that act he proclaims to you that he is done with the world, that henceforth he stays in it only in obedience to his Master's will, and only to promote his glory, and to enjoy its blessings only according to the word of God; and that all its forbidden pleasures, its hopes, its lusts, its covetousness, he utterly renounces. You see one arise. By that act he declares that it

is his intention to walk in newness of life. As he comes up dripping from the wave, he says, "I have given myself to the Lord. I have given him my time, my talents, my heart, my personal services, my fortune—the whole of it, and all that I have, and all that I am." Oh, it is a solemn vow that we make before God in baptism! It is a declaration to God before the world that we are *his*—our lives and our fortunes consecrated to his service! How great a desecration of this ordinance for any one to receive it who makes no such promise, or who does not appreciate any of its teachings! There were none such among the Galatians; for the apostle says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Jesus Christ have put on Christ"; that is, all who have been baptized into Christ have professed his spirit and his religion.

And, my brethren, how fearful is the condition of those of us who have not fulfilled the solemn vow taken upon us *voluntarily* in baptism! Our whole bodies were submerged in token of total, not of partial, consecration. Have we given our souls to the Lord? Do we keep back from the Lord any of the time, the thought, the affection, the energy, or the *money* that belongs to him? Remember, when you gave your whole body to the wave, you gave your whole self and all your possessions to the Lord by the most solemn act of your life—an act far more solemn than the oath you take in a court of justice; for *that* is to men, calling God to witness; but this is an oath to God, calling men to witness. If you prove recreant to this solemn and awful vow, are you not deceived in supposing yourself fit for the kingdom of God? Here is the oath of allegiance to the Almighty, not only spoken, but *acted*, that it may be more impressive; and, if, after that, there is any part of your life or fortune that is not dedicated to God, and considered as *his* and not yours, you have violated the most awful obligations that a human soul can take upon itself. True, such a sweeping principle as this



may sweep many a one out of the church who is in it, but the Church of Christ would not be the loser by such a loss. In the last day, it will be found to sweep many a one away as the chaff before the whirlwind.

Brethren, whenever you see one buried with Christ in baptism, remember that once *you* were buried, and thus professed to renounce the world. Whenever you see one arise, remember that once you, by the same act, professed a determination to walk in newness of life. If you had never made such a vow in your baptism, this ordinance that you will presently witness would not remind you of your duty, and certainly could not remind you of a broken vow—none having ever been made. But you *did* make it. The act was your own, and not another's. You acted for yourself, and not another for you without your knowledge. You were not unconscious; but, in the full possession of mature faculties, you acted knowingly, understandingly, and deliberately. Let the spectacle you are about to witness remind you of what you have done.

5. The ordinance also teaches us that Christ is our pattern. It is in imitation of his example, as well as in obedience to his command, that we submit to this rite. Beautifully depicted by the poet is the scene, when the forerunner of the Son of God administered this impressive rite in Jordan's stream.

It was a cool spot in the wilderness,  
Touched by the river Jordan.

. . . . .  
Softly in  
Through a long aisle of willows, dim and cool,  
Stole the clear waters with their muffled feet,  
And hushing as they spread into the light,  
Circled the edges of the pebbled tank  
Slowly, then rippled through the woods away.  
Hither had come the apostle of the wild,  
Winding the river's course. 'Twas near the flush

Of eve, and with a multitude around,  
 Who from their cities had come out to hear,  
 He stood breast high amid the running stream,  
 Baptizing as the Spirit gave him power.

Silent upon the green and sloping bank  
 The people sat, and mused if he were Christ.

The rippling stream  
 Still turned its silver courses from his breast  
 As he divined their thought. "I but baptize,"  
 He said, "with water ; but there cometh One  
 The latchet of whose shoes I may not dare  
 Even to unloose. He will baptize with fire  
 And with the Holy Ghost." And lo ! while yet  
 The words were on his lips, he raised his eyes,  
 And on the bank stood Jesus !

He waited to go in. But John forbade,  
 And hurried to his feet and stayed him there,  
 And said : "Nay, Master ! I have need of *thine*,  
 Not thou of *mine* !" And Jesus with a smile  
 Of heavenly sadness, met his earnest looks,  
 And answered, "Suffer it to be so now ;  
 For thus it doth become me to fulfill  
 All righteousness." And leaning to the stream,  
 He took around him the apostle's arm,  
 And drew him gently to the midst.

The wood  
 Was thick with a dim twilight as they came  
 Up from the water. With his clasped hands  
 Laid on his breast, the apostle silently  
 Followed his Master's footsteps ; when lo ! a light,  
 Bright as the tenfold glory of the sun,  
 Yet lambent as the softly burning stars,  
 Enveloped them, and from the heavens away  
 Parted the dim blue ether like a veil ;  
 And as a voice fearful exceedingly  
 Broke from the midst, "This is my much-loved Son,  
 In whom I am well pleased," a snow-white dove,  
 Floating upon its wings descended through ;  
 And shedding a swift music from its plumes,  
 Circled, and fluttered to the Saviour's breast !

Presently you will see the same rite administered, the example of which was set eighteen hundred years ago, by our Great Exemplar and Lawgiver. Let it teach you that in this, as in all things else, Christ is our pattern. As God once said to Moses: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount," so let us remember that in this ordinance Christ says to us: "See that thou do all things according to the pattern that I showed thee in the river Jordan."

6. This ordinance also teaches, that by faith we are united to Christ. As one's body is plunged into the water and enveloped, and as it were lost in it, so his soul, if he be a true believer, is buried in Christ, and as it were enveloped in *his* soul, and thus united with it, and thus made the object of God's everlasting love, and therefore forever safe, happy, and blest. "For ye are dead," says an apostle, "and your life is *hid with Christ in God.*" Col. iii. 3. Dead to the world and hid from its sight in baptism; but our life, our soul, is hid with Christ in God. As the whole body is received into the embrace of the wave, so the soul is received into the bosom of God. The perishable is immersed into the emblem of purity—the imperishable into purity itself. "Baptized *into* Christ!" There is profound significancy in the phrase. Thank God that the simple act of faith immerses the believer into the bosom of his love. Thus is answered our Saviour's prayer: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

7. Baptism teaches also the union of Christians. Not only are they united to Christ, but to each other. As substances, however different, yet if all plunged beneath the same fluid, will all come out of it subject to its action, and therefore in that respect alike, and all of a color, as it were—so Christians, however various their characters, if their souls have been baptized into Christ, will "all be one," and will

all bear the marks of his love upon them, and thus be in uniform—in the uniform of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

8. Furthermore and lastly. By this ordinance we profess our belief in the final resurrection of the body, as well as in the immortality of the soul. “Christ is risen from the dead,” says the Scripture, “and become the first fruits of them that slept.” Others had risen from the dead before him, but they died again. Christ was the first who rose from the power of death entirely—the first who rose to immortality. He is the first fruits of *these*—the first sheaf, as it were, which is an earnest of the whole harvest; as an apostle elsewhere says, “Christ the first fruits—*afterward* they that are Christ’s at his coming.” The first sheaf is of the same nature as those that will follow; so, if we know what the first is, we may know what to expect in the rest. Christ, then, rose with an immortal body, glorious as the sun when he shineth in his strength, and this body was received in a cloud up to heaven out of sight. This was the first sheaf, and the others will be like unto it; “for he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” “As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” “If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death,” as we are in baptism, “we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” An apostle also says, “If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the dead?” That is, if there *be* no resurrection from the dead, why are we commanded to use a symbol which teaches that there *is* a resurrection? So, then, as you see one arise from the water, glittering with ten thousand drops of the element that best reflects the light of heaven, you are taught that the child of God will rise from the grave, resplendent with glory, and clothed with immor-

talities. With this precious hope before us, we can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," "who burst the bars of death, and triumphed o'er the grave!" As you see one's body raised from the watery tomb, thus in the last day will that same body triumphantly rise and proclaim its victory over death and hell.

The Almighty does nothing without a reason. If this be so, the ordinance of baptism has not been arbitrarily selected, nor struck upon at random. It must be that there are some *special and valuable ends* to be accomplished by this act; and it must be, that no act but this can accomplish these ends, otherwise it would not have been singled out in preference to all others; and it must be, that if any other act be substituted for this, these ends are defeated, and the ordinance becomes at once meaningless and useless. For the most part, we can see but a little way into the motives of the Almighty; but in this instance, having seen how strikingly and how beautifully the ordinance of baptism typifies nearly all the leading doctrines of the gospel, we are prepared to appreciate something of the divine wisdom in prescribing this particular ceremony, above all others, as the initiatory rite into the Christian Church. (See note on p. 345.)

It teaches most impressively the necessity of a total cleansing—in other words, the doctrine of total depravity. It teaches that there is such a total cleansing, that we may be cleansed from *all* sin and that the whole soul may be washed and made clean—in other words, the doctrine of a complete atonement. It teaches that the death and resurrection of Christ are the grounds of that cleansing. It teaches that Christ is our Pattern and Exemplar. It teaches that we are united to Christ, made one with him, and thus objects of everlasting love. It teaches that we are united to each other, and

are all fashioned alike. It teaches that, as the result of all this, there will be a glorious resurrection of the saints to immortality.

What a speaking fact is baptism—how instructive a preacher! It seems to be an exponent of the whole Christian system. How it condenses, without crowding, a world of thought into a small compass! What a complete epitome, what a miniature gospel, is this one fact, beautiful in its minutest particular, on which each feature of the evangelical system is photographed! Who does not recognize the likeness of the gospel in the ordinance of baptism?

That which I have spent an hour in endeavoring to set forth, will now be tacitly preached over again before your eyes, succinctly recapitulated all in a moment by the watery symbol. The bosom of the deep reflects the image and the light of heaven, but the more honored wave of baptismal waters reflects the better light of the heaven of heavens—the truth of the word of God. What a significant deed is this! *Let men tax their ingenuity to find one other single act that will symbolize so many gospel truths.* In vain are the inventions of men substituted for the designs of God. Here is a rite so impressive that none who ever saw it ever forgot it. The sermon which you have this morning *heard*, you may forget; but the sermon which you will presently *see*, you never can forget; nor will the recipient of the rite ever inquire of others for information as to this part of his history. In baptism you behold a rite which never loses its interest, but is gazed upon for the thousandth time as at the first, and even with a fresh and increasing interest; a rite so attractive that all classes of people, the pious and the thoughtless, the aristocrat and the plebeian, the poet and the sage, all come up in multitudes to witness it, and thus bear testimony (many of them unwillingly, and more of them unwittingly) to its beauty and its impressiveness; a rite which, for eighteen hundred years, has

never lost that hold upon the mind of man which it had at its institution, when "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," flocked to the river-side to behold it; a rite overpowering in its interest and yet majestic in its simplicity, and not set off with the pomps and gewgaws that would gratify a depraved taste; a rite which, to the pure and intellectual, is beautiful, because appropriate and expressive, for all *such* are aware that without both appropriateness and expression there can be no beauty; a rite which all three Persons of the glorious Godhead have delighted to honor; for while the Father spoke from heaven and sanctioned it, the Son submitted to it in the river Jordan, and the Holy Ghost visibly descended and shed the unction of his wing over the scene; a rite which, though silent, is didactic, which, though dumb, is eloquent, and which will be a preacher of the doctrines of the gospel as long as rivers shall find their way to the sea, or as ocean's waves shall wash the shore. Hallelujah! Amen.

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Those who may wish for further light on the view of the ordinance of baptism given on page 243 are referred to "The Mould of Doctrine: A study of Romans vi. 17, as bearing on the Meaning and Value of the Specific Form of Baptism, as appointed by our Lord"; published by the American Baptist Publication Society.

## SERMON XX.

### *A CHARACTER AND A DESTINY.*

“He that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”—PROVERBS XXIX. 1.

IT is a mark of genius to be able to say a great deal in a few words; to present such thoughts in discussing a subject, as will develop the whole of it to the mind of the hearer, without the speaker's going through the process himself. In the art of painting, he who is a master, by two or three strokes of his pencil, as it were recklessly dashed off, will present you with the likeness of a friend; while the mere tyro, expending his energies on details rather than on striking features, after painting and repainting, produces at last a miserable daub, which is a likeness of no one.

Thus also the true poet, wishing to present a scene to the imagination, knows how to seize upon and present those strong points which suggest all the others. A word which embodies the true characteristic, the distinguishing, differentiating, peculiarity of his theme, brings up the whole subject to the mind, better than a chapter of details which belong alike to it, and to a thousand others. The artist does not develop the subject, but by a superior genius puts it in such position that it develops itself. He drops into your mind the *seed-thought*; so that his conception is not presented to you in full and from without, but grows up within.

In an ancient record of hoary antiquity, the writer, whose genius knows no rival, wishing to describe a certain class of persons, brings them up by a single dash of his pen, and by another completes the picture, and presents a likeness which



many a reader or hearer of his lines may instantly recognize as his own. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck."

There you stand, completely reflected from the word of God, as from a mirror. Now turn, and see your destiny sketched by the same master hand. "Shall suddenly be destroyed." With a single stroke he brings it out. "And that without remedy." Another stroke has finished the work, and no more remains to be said.

He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck,  
Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!

*Proverbs xxix. 1.*

Perhaps it may be well for an humbler artist than Solomon to fill up the outline which he has sketched; to present in detail the minuter features which his bolder pencil suggests, but does not delineate.

*"He that being often reprov'd."* From your very childhood, from your earliest recollection, you have been the subject of reproof. The waywardness of your juvenile years was often checked by faithful parents, sometimes kindly and gently, and by the eye alone, but an eye full of reproof. A mother's tender admonitions have been afforded you, and a father's sterner rebuke.

Reason and persuasion have been resorted to, every principle within you has been appealed to, every nerve in your soul has been touched. Reproof and entreaty, mildness and severity, have been mingled in all conceivable proportions. In childhood, the rod, that Scriptural remedy, has done its work. As years have advanced, the tear in a mother's eye has done a more potent work. Your parents have done their share in administering reproof. When from their jurisdiction you passed to that of teachers, they too found it their duty to make you the subject of reproof. Perhaps in the Sunday-school also, your ears have often heard from a

kind but dutiful teacher, the words of reproof. From the pulpit, every Lord's Day of your life, you have heard words of reproof.

The messengers of God have sometimes gently whispered in your ears affectionate admonition, and sometimes by convincing argument have fastened guilt upon you, sweeping away like cobwebs your excuses and cavils and apologies and defences; and, pursuing you with relentless logic, have driven you to the wall, whence there was no escape, and where you were obliged to listen; and have thundered in your ears reproof,—reproof not earth-born, but inspired. Again, when you have not been personally appealed to, the expository lecture delivered in your hearing—calm and passionless, but able and faithful, setting forth clearly the teachings of God's word, and developing its doctrines,—has embodied in it reproof—reproof in perhaps its most efficacious form. For all Scripture is given for *reproof* as well as for doctrine, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. Nor is this all. Many times you have opened your Bible, and on every page you have found reproof. The Commandments reprove you. The whole Law is a reproof. The character of God as there set forth is a stupendous reproof. The history of Jesus Christ is a reproof. The Cross reproves you. Gethsemane reproves you. The tears and groans and blood of a dying Saviour reprove you. Opening graves and rending rocks and darkening heavens reprove you. A great cloud of witnesses reproves you. The noble army of apostles and prophets and martyrs reprove you. All around you in your walk through life, the example of all the good reproves you. Yes, the life of every good man you see is a reproof, not in words, but that stronger reproof which is embodied in action. A relative, a classmate, or an acquaintance who takes a single step towards renouncing sin and seeking God, by that very act reproves you. By that very act, though all unknown to

himself, he gives you the most sincere, honest, inoffensive, yet potent expression of reproof that could possibly be made by words or deeds. His confessions and vows and tears condemn himself, and through himself they reach you in the shape of not unkind, yet bitter reproof.

As if all this were not enough, reproof has assailed you from another quarter. The fate of the bad, no less than the example of the good, reproves you. You have seen the wicked cut off in their sins; you have seen them afflicted by disease, the result of their own folly and sin; you have seen them clothed with wretchedness and rags; and these things are the shocking dialect in which sin itself reproves you. You have seen a companion drunk with wine; and his idiotic driveling, frantic revelry, or insane raving, presenting so disgusting an object as the consequence of sin, has been a most energetic manifestation, by nature herself, of reproof.

Perhaps sickness has visited you; and parching fever or racking pain has been commissioned by the Almighty to administer reproof. Perhaps your friends have been stricken down by your side. You have stood by the bedside of father or mother, or other dear relative, and witnessed the last of life. Perhaps with expiring accents, mingling grief with melting tenderness, clothing it not in its severer forms, but in the form of an invitation to meet him in heaven, the dying one has spoken words of reproof. From the coffin, cold, pale lips have reproved you; and as you gazed upon them, your wrong doings and wrong sayings have thronged upon your recollection, armed with scorpion scourges. From the grave, a still, small voice reproves you. Every mound in the city of the dead, and every memorial stone utter reproof, mute indeed, but touching.

Nor is it only in sad and melancholy forms that you are visited by reproof. A most opposite manifestation of it is made in the beauties and pleasures of the world around you.

These things are the handiworks of God, and show forth the character of him against whom you have sinned, and thus administer reproof. A world bathed in beauty, the azure deep of day or the star-lit dome,—these administer reproof in the silent but magnificent eloquence of nature. The very birds that carol forth their lays on joyous wing, and thus glorify God to the extent of their capacity, reprove you. The bee that wheels along its industrious flight, laden with sweets drawn from even poisonous flowers, reproves you, who draw no good from anything. The beasts of the field reprove you. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but men do not know, and will not consider, the relation they bear, and the duties they owe, to their Maker.

The blessings of Providence reprove you. Your own health and prosperity are evidences of God's munificence, long-suffering, and love. And in the bestowal of continued goodness upon the unworthy and injurious, there is reproof, couched in its most tender, most energetic, most heart-melting, and most soul-subduing form.

Besides all this, as if reproof from without were not enough, God has implanted a secret monitor within you—your own conscience, which day by day, and night by night, year after year, has administered reproof, reproof, reproof.

But all these things together, in their aggregate power, are not equal to another source of reproof that remains yet to be told. The Spirit of the ever-living God operates directly and immediately on your spirit. A part of the office of the Holy Ghost is to "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." The third Person of the adorable Trinity, empanoplied in all the glory of Godhead, with the majesty of insulted Heaven, and with the tenderness of infinite love, to you in person addresses reproof!

Here let us pause. What more reproof is possible? If you should be cast into the world of woe, oh! you will not

say, "Why was I not warned in time? Why did not the Almighty send messengers to reprove me, when reproof could have been of some avail?"

No! you will not slander your Maker there, by saying that he sent you no reproof. Your own consciousness will forever assure you that you have been *often* reproved; yes, often, often, and times without number.

Reproofs the most multiplied, and multipotent, and multi-form, and *myriad-formed*, assailing you through every one of your senses, and through every power of your mind, and every sensibility of your soul, have expended their varied and tremendous energies upon you every moment of your existence, from your earliest childhood down to the latest moment of your life. Everything you see, or hear, or know, or feel, or think, is endowed with a tongue, and with the gift of tongues; and in infinite polyglot, they have all together uttered, and do utter, and will forever utter, reproof, reproof, reproof!

Let us now look for a moment and see whether the first touch of the inspired pencil takes off your likeness. "He that being often reproved." Is not that exact? The whole likeness is not here, it is true, for it takes another touch to finish it; but is not here enough to show, in an instant, for whom it was intended?

Do you not see the history of your own life, the picture of your own soul, the experiences of your own heart, in this single master-stroke of delineation? "He that being often reproved."

Observe now the remainder. "*Hardeneth his neck.*" This is a figurative expression. The word "neck" would not be used in this way in our day. We should use a different figure and say, "*hardeneth his heart.*" When we speak of hardening the heart, or when the Sacred Writer speaks of hardening the neck, what is meant? It is meant to describe

one who, by a long resistance of the influences that ought to affect him, has brought his mind into such a frame that these influences *cannot* affect him. When a man arrives at this state, when his sensibilities are all deadened, and he is past feeling, he answers to the description we are considering.

Have you ever been impressed with the truths of the gospel? Are you a disciple of Jesus? If not, the fact is proof that you have been hardening your heart. What could have resisted the power of such reproofs but a heart indurated to a degree that we have no language to express? If you prosper, doubtless you rejoice in it; if you have sorrows, doubtless you grieve over them. Your sensibilities are tender enough in these respects. It may be, too, that your sympathies are warm and free; you may not be a stranger to emotions of patriotism, benevolence, and generosity. But how much feeling have you in reference to the gospel? Perhaps there is no truth in the Bible which has ever excited within you an emotion. When some men read, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," they read it with tearful eyes, and with hearts glowing with gratitude and love. You read the same announcement with apathy. The storm that passes over the lake ripples its surface and rolls it into waves. The same storm passes over the rock, and leaves its surface unchanged. The Spirit of God passes through his sanctuary and through the land, like the rushing of a mighty wind, and souls are agitated to their very depths, while yours is calm and undisturbed. Its rock-like surface is unsusceptible of a ripple. You have attained to a state in which you are utterly unimpressible. Look once more at the inspired sketch. "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck."

Whose portrait is that? Could its fidelity be greater if

divine truth, like a superior sun, had flashed upon your soul, and cast its photograph upon the sacred page?

Turn we now to another picture. The royal artist, having finished the portrait of his subject, now with another dash of his pencil, inspired as it was for the purpose, depicts in lurid colors, its destiny.

*"Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."*

The destruction spoken of does not imply annihilation. But it does imply that all happiness will be forever cut off; that misery will come in like a flood, and roll over the lost spirit forever. It means that his nature will be incapacitated from enjoying anything that is enjoyable, so that pleasures, if he had them, would be no pleasures to him, and that heaven itself would be no better to him than hell. It means that he will hate the Eternal Father, and hate Christ, and hate the Holy Ghost, and hate all good beings and things, and hate truth, and hate himself, and be hateful to every intelligent being in the universe, good and bad, created and uncreated. This is destruction. Doubtless it will be admitted that destruction is not too bad a name for it.

This destruction will be *sudden*. It may fairly date from the moment when the Spirit of God ceases to strive. Many heaven-appointed messengers have been sent to reprove you; some departed spirit, as a guardian angel, may have been commissioned to whisper sweet and loving reproof. When God says to these messengers, and to that guardian spirit, "Let him alone"; when the last influence which the mercy of Heaven intends to be brought to bear upon you shall have been resisted; and when this is recorded in the great book of accounts,—*then* your fate is sealed. This awful moment in your history may come when you are least expecting it. The turning point will occupy but a moment. It will be sudden as a flash of lightning. It will be done silently; done in heaven, the flash will make no report; on earth we shall

know nothing of it; but it will be *done*. Another awful moment will follow this, though it may be at the distance of years—the moment you cease to breathe. Then this destruction, suddenly apportioned you, will be as suddenly realized.

There is yet another feature of this succinct but graphic description. “Shall suddenly be destroyed, *and that without remedy*.” You will be forever separated from all your friends who may be among the spirits of the just, and there will be no remedy; for between you and them will be a great gulf which cannot be passed. You will be forever associated with the off-scourings of earth and with the spirits of the lost, and there will be no remedy; for there is but one place for all them who have hardened themselves and resisted to the last. The worm that never dies will prey upon you, and there will be no remedy; the fires of perdition will encircle you, and there will be no remedy; and the wrath of God will be upon you, and there will be no remedy; for the eternal wrath of God is not remediable.

You may ask your philosophy, for you will take that with you there from here, and it will assure you that there is no remedy. Human reason will doubtless be far more perfect there than here, and it will demonstrate that there can be no remedy. You may appeal to higher intelligences; and bright angels, from their shining seats, will tell you that there is no remedy. You may appeal higher still, and with frenzied eye may search the word of God; and it will declare with dreadful emphasis that there is no remedy. From those dark abodes you may glance your eye up to God, and the awful frown of Jehovah will assure you, in silent but terrific dialect, that there is no remedy. If you have hope enough still uncrushed to prompt you to exclaim, “O my God! my God! is there no remedy?” The Almighty, insulted once more, would gather up his wrath and thunder back, “Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, pre-



pared for the devil and his angels." And the consciousness of your own soul, and the witnessing universe would alike exclaim, "There is no remedy," and the walls of your prison-house, its gloomy arches, and ever-deepening chambers, would forever echo, "*No remedy! no remedy! no remedy! no remedy! no remedy!*"

"He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck"—there is the man! "Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"—there is his destiny. Look at the first, and if you can say "Mine," you may look at the other and say, "Mine." These things, this character and this destiny, God has joined together, and they cannot be put asunder.

Thank God, there is a gospel. Can you not now regard with emotion what a few moments ago you heard with indifference? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Blessed words! They teach us, that in this present state there *is* a remedy, amply sufficient for all who will use it. What if I am obnoxious to the wrath of the Almighty? The blood of Christ is a remedy. God never turns his wrath on those who trust in his Son. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. What if I am stained with the pollution of sin? The blood of Christ is a remedy; it cleanses from that stain. What if I am unworthy of the inheritance of the saints? The blood of Christ is a remedy; its wondrous power can make me worthy. What if I am unqualified for the enjoyments of heaven? The blood of Christ is a remedy; for it can qualify me. What if the law does condemn me? The blood of Christ is a remedy; for it has satisfied the demands of the law. What if my conscience stings me? The blood of Christ is a remedy; it will extract every root of bitterness from my soul. What though I am beset with ten thousand nameless ills? The blood of Christ is a remedy for *all* ills.

What though death must seize me? The blood of Christ is a remedy—the antidote of death. What though the grave must receive me? The blood of Christ is a remedy. The grave cannot hold me; for Christ has burst its iron gates. What though the world may frown, and Satan condemn me? I can face my fierce accusers, and tell them Jesus died, and find that the blood of Christ is a remedy for all their rage. All time and all eternity cannot bring upon me any injury for which the blood of Christ is not a remedy. A remedy, perhaps retrospective chiefly in its action here, but which in another world will be an eternal preventive; a remedy not merely for troubles that have come, but to prevent all troubles forever from coming.

Thank God for this great remedy. Oh, seize it while you may. “Him that cometh to me,” says the Saviour, “I will in no wise cast out.” Come, then, to Jesus; and though, under frequent reproofs, you have hardened your neck, you shall not be destroyed, but will find a *remedy*!

While God invites, how blest the day!  
How sweet the gospel’s charming sound!  
Come, sinners, haste, oh, haste away,  
While yet a pardoning God is found.

Soon, borne on time’s most rapid wing,  
Shall death command you to the grave;  
Before his bar your spirits bring,  
And none be found to hear or save.

In that lone land of deep despair,  
No Sabbath’s heavenly light shall rise,  
No God regard your bitter prayer,  
No Saviour call you to the skies.

*Now*, God invites. How blest the day!  
How sweet the gospel’s charming sound!  
Come, sinners, haste, oh, haste away,  
While yet a pardoning God is found!

## SERMON XXI.

### NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

“Redeeming the time.”—EPHESIANS v. 16, and COLOSSIANS iv. 5.

THIS expression occurs twice in the New Testament; once in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and once in his Epistle to the Colossians. In both instances the meaning appears to be the same. In both instances reference is made, in the context, to wisdom; that is, as I suppose, to the true wisdom which leads a man to walk in the true way, and to walk in it “circumspectly,” and “understanding what the will of the Lord is.” The translation of the text, regarding it as merely verbal, appears to be correct; yet these words fail to convey to our minds the thought expressed by the original. Instead of the word *redeem*, let us substitute the words *buying up*; and instead of the word *time*, let us substitute the word, *opportunity*. We then have the expression, “Buying up the opportunity,” as the real text which we are to consider; and this rendering of the thought—“Buying up the opportunity”—has been settled on as correct by the best modern scholarship; and in the Revised Version these words are placed in the margin, as explanatory of the meaning of the words, “Redeeming the time.” But what is meant by “Buying up the opportunity?” It seems to be implied that many opportunities have been lost, and if lost, lost forever and not to be regained. In view of this, future opportunities are to be bought up, that is eagerly sought for, and obtained, as it were, at any price. Not that future diligence can atone for past delinquency, but that our obligations to diligence are increased by such delinquency.

At the beginning of a new year, it is well to look over the past, and take an account of our losses, in order that in the future we may make them up if possible; and if not, that we may at least meet increased obligations with increased zeal. In the year that has past, each one of us has lost many precious opportunities; no two of us perhaps are exactly alike in the number and kind of opportunities lost; some have lost in one way, and some in another; some more, and some less; but I doubt not that all have been heavy losers, and that all are therefore under weighty obligations to renewed effort in the divine life.

Some have lost the great opportunity. They might long ago have come to enjoy peace with God, and they have not done it. This loss includes all other losses; for what is anything worth to anybody, so long as his heart is in a state of alienation from God? Money is one of our most common measures of value, but how much money would it take to compensate a man for loss of peace with God? Our loves and our friendships are very precious to us, but what good will all these do us in the great day of accounts, when God will either separate us from our friends and loved ones, or will send us and them all together to a world of woe? Our sensuous enjoyments are valuable to us, for God gave them to us as sources of pleasure, but of what avail will these be, when sickness or old age deprive them of their zest, or when death shall put an end to them forever? What is *anything* worth, what is *everything* worth, to a man who is alienated from God? Those who have lost the opportunity to secure peace with him have lost *all*. Those who have not the *true* riches have *no* riches. The depth of their poverty is immeasurable. No language can describe the forlornness and desolateness and utter and infinite ruin of their condition. Many such are within the sound of my voice. They appear to be prosperous and happy, but they know that their hearts

are estranged from God; and so long as this condition continues, they are standing as it were on a projecting ledge—projecting over eternity, and from under which the sands of time are shifting away, and the coming of the fall, and of the crash is matter of certainty. They have had opportunity to stand upon a rock, upon the Rock of Ages—a rock whose foundations are laid in the eternal purposes of God's mercy, and which will stand forever. They have had a thousand opportunities, indeed they have had one every moment; but up to this time, they have missed them all. Let the saints look upon them with intensest solicitude and with profoundest commiseration.

This leads me to address another class of persons—those called to be saints, but who have not responded faithfully to their calling; and these are they whom chiefly the apostle addresses in the text, and that too with reference to their conduct “toward them that are without.” You see unconverted sinners all around you. Some of them are in your families; some of them you press to your bosoms. How many opportunities have you lost of doing them good? How many times have there been when a word of warning, or of caution, or of gentle admonition, or of kindly instruction, or of affectionate entreaty, might have been given with effect, and when you have failed to seize the opportunity? It may be that during the whole year, or perhaps during your whole life, you have never made one solitary effort for the salvation of a soul. No one can say he has had no opportunity for such things; for every one has had opportunities without number. Many of these you have lost; possibly all of them. Others may suffer by your negligence, and certainly *you* suffer by it. Who knows but that if you had used your opportunities, there might be many a gem in your crown of rejoicing which will never glitter there? And even if all your efforts had been failures, your reward would still have

been exceeding great. Effort—effort in doing good, is *never* a failure. The effort itself is success. How grand a stimulus to pious effort, that whether we succeed or fail, we nevertheless succeed! How brilliant the success, how magnificent the reward of that woman, of whom our Lord said: “She hath done what she could!” Have you done what you could? Have you done half of it? Have you done any appreciable part of it? If not, what frightful losses you have met with! If you had lost a thousand dollars at the end of every month in the year, you would consider yourself exceedingly unfortunate. But the loss of any number of thousands would not be worthy to be compared to the loss of one opportunity to save a soul, or to *try* to do it.

Descending now to matters of less, but still of great, importance, how much have you done, or, rather, how much have you failed to do, for the benefit of your fellow-men with regard to the interests of this present life? If these interests are not so great as those of eternity, it is nevertheless a crying sin to neglect them. If they are worthy of God’s attention, they are worthy of ours. How many hungry have you failed to feed, that you might have fed? How many naked have you not clothed, that you might have clothed? How many have shivered with cold, whom you might have warmed, and every one of whose shudders has sent to high heaven the tale of your heartless indifference? How many a wail of suffering childhood has pierced the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth with the recital of your disregard of humane obligation? You know of no such cases? How does it happen that you do not know, when such things are so easy to discover? It can only be because you have closed your eyes. In this case, it can hardly be said that you have *lost* the opportunity; you have thrown it away. Remember this saying of the word of God: “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many

a curse." Prov. xxviii. 27. Count up your losses, and see how you have impoverished yourself.

Descending again to still smaller things, how many times, when you might have thrown a ray of sunshine on somebody's path, have you failed to do it? In the daily intercourse of life, how many of its little courtesies and little kindnesses have you omitted? How many smiles have you failed to scatter around you? How often have you failed, in the petty annoyances of life, to fend off their irritations, and to give a pleasant turn to them, by a bright and cheery word? How often have you failed, when those about you were perplexed with matters great or small, to lighten their burden by bearing part of it, and to strengthen them for the remainder by encouragement and sympathy? Think you that these things are too small to be mentioned in a sermon, and on a solemn occasion like this? They are not too small to be entered up on God's book. To give the cup of cold water is a very small thing; *not* to give it is a very great thing. The characteristic bearing of one's daily life *is* his life. If all the extraordinary occasions of one's life were put in one scale, and all the ordinary occasions in the other, the latter would far outweigh the former. Two men may be equally correct in all the leading affairs of life, and yet one may illuminate and enliven, with a becoming cheerfulness, every circle he enters, while the other casts a gloom wherever he goes. One makes everything sweet; the other makes everything sour. This general make-up of one's life counts in this world, and will count in the world to come. Whatever tells here will tell there. Has your daily walk been a daily blessing to everybody who has come within the sphere of your influence? If it were all to go over again, could you not make for yourself a far brighter record? If so, then see what innumerable opportunities you have lost! Taken all together, the loss is a great one. Different deportment on

your part might have altered the whole course of somebody's life. It may be that husband, or wife, or brother, or son, or friend, might have been wholly a different person, under different influence from you. The destiny of some for another world may have taken an unhappy direction, not from any prominent event in your life, but simply from the influence distilled imperceptibly from your habitual bearing; and that, too, although on the more conspicuous matters of duty you have been comparatively blameless. There is no measuring the amount of loss you may have sustained, by forgetting that people are often more affected by what you *are*, than by what you *do*. The little things of life, too insignificant to be named, are the things which show what you *are*. These are the straws that show the general drift of your character.

Put all these things together; our failures in the little amenities of social and family life; our failures in duty towards the widow and the orphan, and the sick, and the poor, and helpless, and homeless, and friendless; and our failures in duty to the souls of dying men, dying unprepared to meet their God, some of them our own flesh and blood; and our failures in duty to the whole human race, every member of which is a brother, and to the whole world of which we are a part,—how vast our loss of opportunities, every one of which might have been turned to account!

There is another class of neglected opportunities, really included in principle with some that have been named, and also included in like manner with some yet to be named, but which are worthy of more specific mention. How many times, and in how many ways, have you neglected your duty to the church of which you are a member? Do you attend its stated meetings for worship? Yes, perhaps on Sunday, when it is fashionable, but not on Wednesday night, when it is unfashionable. How many opportunities of united prayer with the people of God have you lost? Some of you, I think



the great majority of you, have lost as many during the year, and perhaps during several years, as there are weeks in the year. Since I have occupied my present position, I think that not one member of this church in twenty has been found on Wednesday night in the place where he ought to be. How much has been your loss in respect to duty to the church? No one can tell. The number of dollars for which a defaulter in bank is responsible can be counted; but the moral turpitude of a defaulter either of that kind or of *your* kind, can neither be counted nor measured. It is not for me to say how much guilt is incurred by default in religious duty to the church; nor is it for you to say how little. God is our judge. But the lost opportunities are for you to consider. Look back over the year; count the lost days, week by week; add them up, and try to form some conception of the responsibility incurred.

But in counting up our losses at the end of the year, we shall fall far short of the facts, if we forget to name the opportunities which we have lost to benefit our own souls. Steady effort, for one whole year, to improve one's own religious character, would lead to palpable results. A year's culture would lead to great spiritual development. It is impossible that one should keep trying, for a whole year, to improve and increase his own graces, without making some advance; not so much, perhaps, as he would like, but enough for him to realize it himself; and, at any rate, enough to be visible to others. Have you made this advance? Do those who know you see that you are a better man than you were a year ago? If not, if indeed you have lost a whole year's growth in grace, who can tell the magnitude of that loss? It may be that you have declined, and that you are a worse man than you were a year ago. If so, it would seem that despair is not far off.

But notwithstanding our enormous losses, let us not yet

give way to despair; it may be that the mercy of God has provided some help for us.

Is there any way to get back the opportunities lost? None whatever. The record of the past is made up, and the book is closed and sealed, and no man can open it. God will open it at the last day, and then that record we shall face. But opportunities once lost are lost forever. There is no setting back of the sun on the dial, no rolling back of the years, so that we can begin where we were long ago, and traverse the path again.

Yet the apostle, speaking by the Spirit, exhorts us to redeem the time, that is, as I understand him, to buy up future opportunities; and what he means, I suppose, is simply to encourage renewed consecration. Not that the past can be recovered, but that its failures should stimulate us to double diligence in the future. Of course every moment of our lives we are under supreme obligations to God; and we have no power to fill up the measure of that moment, and no surplus power which will run over the measure of the present moment, and run back and fill up the empty moments of the past. Yet if this *could* be done, it *ought* to be done. The willing mind is what is called for; the earnest heart is demanded. Profound regret should possess our souls in view of our past defalcations. No such regret can be genuine without increase of diligence, and *vast* increase. The man who says he is sorry, but who continues as indifferent and negligent as before, is *not* sorry; and to look at all these lost opportunities without sorrow is to double the loss; and to continue neglectful is to increase the loss thus doubled. But he who, struck through with shame and grief in view of past shortcomings, throws his soul with enthusiasm into the duties of the present and the future, shows, at least, that he would buy back what he has lost if he could. On this frame of mind the blessing of God may be expected; while that oppo-

site frame, which says, "The past is gone and I cannot help it," indicates a disposition, rather let me say, a determination, to repeat in the future the history of the past, to increase guilt, and to intensify it; and the leadings of this way are to everlasting destruction.

At the beginning of a new year, Time takes a new departure, and so should we. The occurrence of such an epoch should arouse our attention and cause us to stop for awhile, and consider where we are, and what we are, and what we are coming to. Thoughtless, heedless, reckless, must he be who does not pause between the years to look back on the course over which he has come, and forward to that over which he must pass. To the young, the years before them may seem to be many, but they may be very few, they must be few even at best. Some of this assembly in all probability have entered on their last year, and will never see the dawn of another New Year's Day. Certainly, the entrance on the last year will come at some time, if it has not come already. Our thoughts have been turned this morning to the past, and in our own history we have certainly seen much to regret. We can recover nothing; but the future is in our own hands, and it will be what we make it. Shall we add another year of neglect to the years of neglect already gone? Surely no man can deliberately decide to do so wicked a thing as this. Perhaps almost every one who hears me will incline to make a resolve to do better—beginning at some time in the future, perhaps tomorrow. All such resolutions are worthless; they are nothing but the snares of Satan, nothing but the temptations of the devil. They are spiritual opiates, the effect of which is to deaden the sensibilities and lull the conscience to sleep, while at the same time they enhance guilt, and, under cover of piety, are insults to the Majesty on high. Let us take one of them up and analyze it. It is virtually an address of

the heart to God. Its language is this: "O God, I know that I have sinned; I know that I ought to abandon my evil ways; but I love sin; I love it too well to give it up now. I know that it is hateful to thee; but it is sweet to me. I dare not continue in it always, for I am afraid of the consequences; but I will trespass on thy forbearance, and risk thy vengeance one more day, and *to-morrow* I will try to lead a new life." This is a literal translation of every resolution made to take effect in the future. It is little short of blasphemy; and yet, strange to say, its effect is to quiet a man's fears, and to make him satisfied with himself. I beseech you therefore, my friends, make no resolutions looking to the future, unless they are to begin to take effect *now*.

Especially do I address this appeal to those who are not at peace with God, and who have been hardening their hearts by procrastination and in other ways during the whole year just past, and indeed through all the previous years. "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." If you begin the year with hardening, you will be likely to close it with hardening; and a whole year's hardening, in addition to what you have already done, may make your case forever hopeless. Certain it is that on next New Year's Day, if you live to see it, you will be in far worse condition than you are this day. Every year that passes by, your guilt will accumulate more and more, and your prospect of release from it will be less and less; a perpetual *crescendo* on the one hand and a perpetual *diminuendo* on the other, and thus you and eternal life will be forever farther and farther apart. I pray you therefore that *this day* you turn your faces Zion-ward, and never look back. Cross not the threshold of this house without saying in your heart, "I am Christ's and he is mine, my Saviour and my Lawgiver, on whose blood I rely, and whose will shall be the law of my life."

To those called to be saints, but who are unworthy of their calling, as every one of you is, I have to say this: Brethren, I beseech you, form no resolutions; have nothing to do with them; they are the delusions of the devil, *unless* they are to begin to take effect *this very day*. Do not, I pray you, do not insult your Maker by saying such a word as to-morrow to *him*. Go straight home, and as soon as you get there, do something which will inaugurate a new life. Take the word of God in your hand, and go to your closet; and there on your knees confess, and thank God that you are alive, which you do not deserve to be; and cry mightily for help to walk in the right way for the future. When you leave your closet, let the unction of the place abide with your spirit through the rest of the day; and when to-morrow comes, if it ever should with you, begin at once to do something for the salvation of sinners. If you can do nothing else for them, pray for them; pray for them by name; and I think you will not be long doing this, before you can find something else to do for them. Begin at once to do something for the relief of the needy. Just remember that the Christian religion, with its practical benevolence left out, is no religion. Surely you can spend a part of your life in doing what Christ was doing during the whole of his. He went about doing good. Imitate his example, and when you are doing this, you may be sure that you are doing right. If you know of no objects of charity; hand your bounty to me, and I will engage to see that it is properly dispensed. Put no confidence, I beg you, in your prayers; do not deceive yourself with the thought that any prayer you ever made, or ever will make, can reach the ear of God, unless it is accompanied with the spirit of almsgiving; and remember that what claims to be the spirit of almsgiving, which does not manifest itself in actual giving, on proper occasion, is a lying spirit.

Begin anew to apply the principles of the gospel to the

smaller things, to the smallest things of life. Let the spirit of Jesus so imbue you that it will shine forth through your whole life. Let meekness, patience, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, sympathy, courtesy, and captivating cheeriness, so mark your conduct that wherever you go there will be gladness. Embody the gospel in your life, so that as you go, you preach. Let those who live in the house with you see that there is a change in you; and remember that, for the most part, changes which cannot be seen do not exist. Begin a new church life. You need not wait till Wednesday. Begin to-day. Pray for the peace and prosperity of your church; pray for sound doctrine, and sound discipline, and sound practice; pray for your pastor, and for your brethren, and for the blessing of God on the efforts that are here made for the furtherance of his cause; and on Wednesday night come and lay your heart alongside of mine, and by the hearts of your brethren, and let us unite our prayers all in one. Begin at once, begin as soon as you get home, to cultivate your own graces, by using the means of grace; prayer and diligent search of the Scriptures, and doing the things therein commanded, will make a new man of you; so that if you could now see yourself as you will be even after one year of such self-treatment as this, you would not know yourself.

It is the duty of the whole church and of every member of it to do all this. Suppose all were to do it, what a grand uplifting there would be of the plane on which we all stand! What times of rejoicing we should have! What a happy people we should be! How the rich blessing of Heaven would gush out upon us! We should have no room to receive it, and it would run over, and spread over the whole city; nay, I know not that the continent would hold it, and it might envelop the world. And whether so or not, the event would project itself grandly into eternity.

Some sober thinker may check me here, and say, "Oh,

yes, it is true that if all would redeem the time as best they could, the results would be indeed magnificent; but all will not do this; perhaps not one tenth part of them; and the millennial glory you have described we shall never see. What shall I do?" Do just what you would do if it all depended on yourself! "But," he may reply, "when I have done my best, I shall still be an unprofitable servant. I know my weakness; I know that I shall not fill the measure of future duty, much less can I atone by extra merit for the past; the opportunities that I have lost are lost, and I can never buy them back, and I am forever bankrupt before God."

Be of good courage, brother. If we cannot buy the past back to us, there is a power that can buy us away from it, and we can at least buy up the future. If we should do all that I have said we ought to do, it would be only as matter of duty towards God, and towards man, and towards our own souls. If it all *were* done, we should not depend on it for our hopes of eternal life. A man is justified by faith, good brother without the deeds of the law. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. It is not on what *we* do, but on what *he* did, that we put our reliance. We do not build on human works, for they are but a sandy foundation, and great would be the fall of anything built on it. We build on an Eternal Rock. We live and die, saying, and singing:

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
On Christ the solid rock I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

"Ah!" says one, "that is the doctrine I love to hear; that is the true gospel; trust in Christ and do nothing." Stop, my friend, we have not so learned Christ. Trusting in Christ and doing nothing, is like trusting in Providence, and doing nothing. Trust in Christ, and do what you can. The trust is for your salvation; and nothing but trust has anything to

do with it. Doing what you can, is for your duty, and for obedience, and for the glory of God, and for the good of your fellow-men, and for your own growth in grace. The doing is the evidence of your trusting; and where there is no doing there is no trusting, loud assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. Blessed is he, and he only, who combines a life of obedience with a life of trust.

The opportunities of the past are lost, many of them lost and gone forever. We cannot buy them back. But Christ can buy us away from the responsibility of the loss. The thought should inspire us with loving gratitude and incite us to newness of life; and the newness of the year should give force to the holy impulse. Let us then begin the year, redeeming the time, and thanking God that Christ has redeemed *us*.



## SERMON XXII.

### DEDICATION SERMON.<sup>1</sup>

“Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever.”—PSALM xciii. 5.

WITHOUT spending a moment's time in introductory remark, let us proceed at once to consider what is becoming to the house of the Lord. The text says: “*Holiness* becometh thine house, O Lord! forever.” So far as this text teaches duty, how is that duty to be discharged?

1. In the first place, the house ought never to be used for any other purpose than for the worship of Almighty God. There are a great many things which it is proper to do in other places, but which it is not proper to do here. Here everything is improper except worship. I am sorry to be obliged to confess that a great many of our people have used their churches for other purposes; but whenever they have done so, they have done wrong. Churches have been used for school-houses, for public addresses of various kinds, such as literary lectures, and even for political speeches. All these things are a wicked misuse of the house of God. There is a place for everything; but this is no place for anything but worship.

It is a misfortune that a church has to be used even for Sunday-school purposes; because, although the Sunday-school is an efficient means of spreading a knowledge of gospel truth, and has been the means, I doubt not, of saving many a soul from death, and thus of glorifying God and his Son

<sup>1</sup>Preached for a Negro Church, near Athens, Georgia, March 31, 1878.

Jesus Christ, yet the machinery of a Sunday-school is somewhat like a day-school in its character; there must necessarily be more or less of conversation, and a disturbance of that quiet and solemnity, which ought to be observed in a place like this. Still, work, that is, *this* kind of work, is worship; and in cases where it is impossible to do it anywhere else, it may be justifiable to use a church for this purpose. But I have always regretted this necessity; and should enjoy worship more highly, if I knew that the house were used for no other purpose—no, not even for a Sunday-school. Even a church conference ought to be held in another place, if possible; and many of the wealthy churches have separate rooms for that purpose. True, the holding of a conference is the Lord's work, and in a certain sense it may be called worship; but it is *indirect* worship, and frequently becomes somewhat business-like in its character; and not a word ought ever to be spoken in this house, except as a part of divine service. When it is impossible to have more than one room, as I suppose is the case with you, it is a necessity to use the room you have for purposes of conference; but I regret the necessity. In any case when it is *not* a necessity, I protest against the use of this house for any other purpose than the direct worship of the Almighty.

On one occasion in our Saviour's life he went to the Temple, and found people there selling doves and changing money; and he drove them out of the house with a whip of small cords. Now, the selling of doves was a lawful, proper, and honorable business, and so was the changing of money. At that time, doves were offered in sacrifice, and this offering was part and parcel of the worship. In offering these doves the people were obeying the commandments of the Lord himself. It was not convenient for everybody to raise his own doves or to catch wild ones; so some persons made a business of providing doves for sale, and a very proper

business it was, as already remarked. Indeed it was a necessary business; for many persons, if they could not buy doves, could not get them at all; and so these persons would have been excluded from worship altogether. Hence the business of selling doves was necessary. Still, proper as it was, it ought not to have been done in the Lord's house; and our Saviour drove out the men with a whip. So with the money changers; their business was proper and necessary. People came up to the Temple at Jerusalem from all parts of the world, and they brought their money with them; and there were many different kinds of money, much of which would not pass in Jerusalem, although it was good where it came from; and it was all that the people had. Now there were some men who made a business of buying up this uncurrent money and exchanging it for current money. The strangers who came to Jerusalem were very glad to find this convenient way of exchanging money that would not pass, for such as they could use; and of course the money changers, or brokers, as we call them, charged them a little profit on the exchange, and so both parties were benefited; and if it had not been for this, the strangers would have had no money that they could use, and so they could have purchased no doves, and hence they could have offered no sacrifices, and would thus have been practically excluded from worship altogether; and moreover they would have had no way to pay their expenses of living and of travel. So the business of money changers was not only honorable, but necessary. Yet it was *not* necessary that this business should have been done in the house of the Lord; and hence our Saviour threw down the tables on which they kept their money and drove out the men with a whip. Let us learn from this how jealous the Lord is of his house; and let us be careful that we do nothing in *this* house which is unbecoming to the place where his Honor dwelleth.

Everything is unbecoming which is not immediately connected with worship, and everything is at least undesirable, except worship itself. As to using the house for any worldly business, or on any secular occasion, it is an outrage not to be thought of. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever."

2. Another thing: No doctrine ought ever to be preached here except such as is found in the word of God. Holiness becomes his house, and no religious instruction is holy except that which God himself has communicated. False doctrine is the worst of all falsehoods, because it misleads people on the most important of all subjects; and while falsehood is to be detested everywhere, it is peculiarly dreadful in the house of God. I suppose it is not often that any one would knowingly, and intentionally, proclaim false doctrine in the house of God; still it is constantly done in ignorance. It ought not to be done at all. A man who pretends to have a message from God ought to be sure that he has his message right. "Thus saith the Lord," is a very different thing from "thus saith the preacher." It is a dreadful thing to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Hence a man assumes an awful responsibility who stands up here to proclaim the word of the Lord, unless he is sure that he *has* the word of the Lord. Do not suppose either that any man speaks by inspiration. There *was* a time when men *were* inspired; but that time is past. Christ did say to his apostles: "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." Matt. x. 19. But he has not said this to *us*. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; but all preaching is not. No preaching is inspired; and no man knows anything of the way of life except so far as he has learned it from God's holy word. The Bible is our only source of religious knowledge; and all men who pretend to speak by any other authority than this,

or who pretend to know anything except what they learn from this, are base impostors, and ought not to be listened to, nor allowed to speak. Every man ought to be very careful how he speaks, when he claims to be preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God. How does he know that what he is preaching *is* the gospel? Mere guess-work will not do. A man must be sure that he is right, and that every word that he says is sanctioned by the Holy Bible. How is he to know this? Only by careful study, accompanied with a sincere desire to learn, and by prayer for divine guidance. A man's head and heart must both be in right condition, and he must apply himself with zeal, and even then he must watch himself, lest he be putting in some of his own notions, and calling them by the name of the word of God.

3. Again: No practices ought to be engaged in here, except those which have the sanction of the divine word. The outward forms of worship are important. True, the real worship of God is in the heart; and no mere formal worship, unaccompanied by the homage of the heart, ever did any good, though it may often have done harm. But while it is true that heart worship is the only *real* worship, yet it is important that the outward expression of that worship should assume proper forms. The second of the Ten Commandments forbids the use of images in the worship of God. God is not willing that he himself should be worshiped in that *way*—that is, by the use of images. This shows that the *way* in which God is to be worshiped is important, as well as the worship itself. Hence there ought to be no rites, and no ceremonies, taught here as binding on the worshiper, except such as are distinctly required by the word of God. All human inventions, when palmed off upon the people as divine requirements, are an outrage upon both God and man. No matter how beautiful, or how impressive, a ceremony may be, if it is not instituted of God, it is binding

on nobody. But it may be said: "Suppose we introduce some ceremonies in our worship, not claiming for them that they are divine, or that they are obligatory, but simply that they are convenient and agreeable." Even here we are treading on dangerous ground. It is best that divine service should be as simple as possible. If our worshiping is done decently and in order, the fewer ceremonies we have the better. All customs and all observances, except in so far as they look to habitual good order, are to be avoided.

4. This leads me to comment on the expression just used, "decently and in order." This expression is used in 1 Cor. xiv. 40. The apostle, in that place, is giving instructions as to proper behavior when the people of God come together in his house. It seems that even in the apostolic churches there had crept in some disorder and confusion. Sometimes more than one would speak at once, and thus neither could be heard, and God was mocked rather than worshiped. In those days they spoke with tongues; that is, they spoke in other languages besides their own, and they even availed themselves of the opportunity to show off this miraculous gift in such a way as to disturb public worship. So do men abuse the good gifts of God. What then, with some praying, and some singing, and some speaking with tongues, and several speaking at once, the confusion became disgraceful, and the apostle rebukes it. He says, that a stranger coming in would think that they were *mad*—that is, that they were crazy. And I have myself seen churches in such disorder that people and preachers appeared to be all crazy together. If the apostle had seen what I have seen, I doubt not that he would have said, as he did say to the Corinthians, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." Doubtless he would have told them that all things must be done "decently," implying that what they were doing was *indecent*; and that all things must be done "in order," im-

plying that they were all *out* of order. Perfect quiet ought to prevail in the house of God at all times. Singing and praying aloud ought never to be done at the same time; because the praying cannot be heard for the singing, and the singing cannot be heard for the praying. Thus each destroys the other. No man has a right to interrupt public prayer; but if he sings aloud while some one else is praying aloud, he interrupts the prayer, and is thus disturbing public worship. It is just as improper to disturb public worship by untimely singing and praying as it is to disturb it in any other way. Oftentimes have I seen one man preaching; and at the same time two or three more exhorting; while others were praying; and others singing; and others again shouting and screaming and yelling; and yet others clapping their hands; and some jumping up and down; and some, perhaps, rolling on the floor.

My brethren! I beseech you not to do such things. There is no genuineness in such so-called worship as this. It is all a mockery. I beseech you do not show off this miserable folly to the world, and call it the religion of Jesus. It is nothing but barbarism. The Apostle Paul virtually calls it barbarism, when he says, "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." 1 Cor. xiv. 11. It is a slander upon the New Testament to pretend that the scandalous disorder seen in some churches is a service required by that Book. Let heathen and idolaters do these things, and act like madmen, sometimes turning night into day, and disturbing the peace of a whole neighborhood; but let us, who are civilized people, and Christian people, professing the religion of Jesus, and worshipers of Almighty God,—let *us* worship in the beauty of holiness, in all reverence, meekly, devoutly, decently, and in order. So shall we render an acceptable service to God. Noise and confusion are not

becoming to the house of God ; but "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever."

5. Another most important point is this : That while holiness becomes the house of God, and all the forms of public worship, it is even more important, if such a thing could be possible, that holiness should pervade the private lives of the people of God. It is the people who constitute the church, and not the building. The true church is not built of stone or wood or brick. God's real temple is a spiritual temple. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that *ye* are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And again he says, "Ye are of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord ; in whom *ye* also are builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit." Eph. ii. 19-22.

Remember, then, my brethren, two things : 1. The temple of God is holy ; 2. this temple "*ye are*." 1 Cor. iii. 17. Therefore the membership is to be kept pure.

No immoral practice is to be tolerated. No disorderly life is to pass without rebuke. The law of God is the law of the church, and of all its members. Any one who violates that law should be subjected to discipline. If one even *appears* to violate that law, his case should be inquired into. I do not mean that there should be detectives and spies, or unkind and unreasonable criticism, or a hasty disposition to find fault. Above all, would I caution you against making a cloak of your zeal for the purity of the church, to cover an opportunity for indulging private malice ; subjecting a man to church discipline, not because you love the church, but because you hate him, or because he is your antagonist or your rival. I beseech you, brethren, avoid this crying sin.



On the other hand, be not so charitable as to allow improper conduct to pass unnoticed. Watch over each other jealously; but let your jealousy be for the Lord's house, and not for yourselves. Do it in all kindness, in all meekness, in all gentleness, in all forbearance, remembering that you also may be tempted. Preserve the truth, but let it be done in love. Maintain a godly discipline, but let it be done with the holy charity of the New Testament. In the spirit of brotherly love, in the spirit of Jesus, labor with the erring, and exhaust all gospel means to reclaim backsliders; but in the last resort, remember that no charity is charity which allows the holiness of God's house to be dishonored. Set your face like a flint against all that is wrong; and if a brother, in spite of all remonstrance and all entreaty, will persist in evil, turn him out. Have no fellowship with him. No matter how high his position may be, or how great his influence is, *turn him out!* The more prominent he is, the more important it is that he should be put down, if his conduct brings rebuke on the cause of Christ. "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The gospel is no respecter of persons. It knows nothing of rank. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, are all alike in the church. What is law for one, is law for all. And *whoever*, by a life inconsistent with the Christian profession, defiles God's spiritual temple, let him be to you as a heathen man and a publican. Cut him off instantly from your fellowship. Do not suppose, because one of your members is very active, or very prominent and influential, that you cannot afford to lose him. You can afford to lose him a great deal better than you can afford to keep him, if he is not in the right path. A man whose life is a discredit to the church is a mill-stone around your necks, and the bigger the man, the bigger the mill-stone. No church can afford to carry such a dead weight. Cut him off, and, instead of sinking,

you will rise when you are cut loose from this weight that drags you down. "Yes," one may say, "but he is a man of such power that we cannot get along without him." I tell you, you *can* get along without him. The truth is, you cannot get along *with* him. Remember that holiness becomes the house of the Lord, and especially his spiritual house.

6. I am reminded here to say, that if it is important that you should deal promptly but kindly with those who are already *in* your membership, it is quite as important that you should be careful whom you take in. No man ought to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ unless he is indeed and in truth a new creature,—that is, one who is born again by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the very theory on which a Baptist Church is founded. The very moment this theory is intentionally violated, the church ceases to be Baptist, if it does not cease to be a church of Christ at all. But without discussing this last point, I proceed to say, that perhaps the greatest injury that can be inflicted on a man is to baptize him, if he is not converted. It puts him in a false position; it leads him to believe that he is what he is not; it is stupefying medicine to his conscience; it puts him in such a position that preaching which is addressed to unconverted sinners does not reach him, and that which is adapted to saints is not suited to him; so it really puts him out of reach altogether. Of course, I do not mean to say that such a man cannot be saved; but I do say that there is far less hope of him than there is of an unconverted sinner, who has not been deceived as to his true condition. So be careful whom you take into the church, for the sake of souls; and beware lest in your over-zeal for men you do them deadly harm, instead of doing them good.

Again: Be careful whom you receive into the church, because, the greatest injury you can inflict on a church is to fill it with unconverted people. It is like filling a camp

with spies and with soldiers from a hostile army; it is like filling a man's veins with poison instead of blood. The policy of such a church is like suicide; and not only so, but of suicide in its most horrible form.

Again: Be careful whom you receive into the church, because the greatest injury you can inflict on the outside world of unconverted sinners is to fill the church with those who, like themselves, are unconverted. The most effective preaching is not that which comes from the pulpit: it is that which comes from the lives of those who claim to be the people of God. Ye are living epistles, "known and read of all men." The world judges of the church by the conduct of its members; and nothing does the cause of Christ so much harm as for it to be falsely represented. When you receive an unconverted member, you take one of the children of darkness, and hold him up to the world as a sample of the children of light. Of course, this is a libel on the gospel; of course, men will say, "If that is a specimen of what the gospel can do, we will have none of it." A laundry woman would not exhibit to the public a piece of soiled and unwashed linen as a specimen of what she could do.<sup>1</sup> Nor ought the church to show to the world an unconverted man as a specimen of one who has experienced "the washing of regeneration."

7. Let me caution you, my brethren, against a mistake which is common in these latter days. People judge of the prosperity of a church by its mere increase of numbers. If I ask, "Is such a church prosperous?" the answer will be, "Oh yes! they have just received a hundred members by baptism." Now when I receive such an answer as this, I always feel alarmed. I ask myself, "How many of that hundred are converted?" If *one* of them is unconverted, I am not

<sup>1</sup> The audience was composed, very largely, of laundresses and their families.

sure but that it would be better for the ninety-nine to stay out, than for the hundred to come in. But I do not say this, and will not say it; for I do not know. But this I do know, that quality is more important than quantity. Better have a few members all converted, than to have many, if they are to be a mixed multitude of good and bad all mingled together.

I have often thought that perhaps the best way to judge of the prosperity of a church is not by the number they take in, but by the number they turn out. I will not say this; but I do say, that the best way to judge of a church is not merely by its numbers, but by its character. The question is, not how *many* members have they? but what *kind* of members are they? If they are all men of steady habits; of good conduct, of pure life; if they are all men of prayer; all zealous for the salvation of souls, and for the glory of God; in short, if they are all good, conscientious, faithful, Christian men, walking in the way of the Lord, and in the footsteps of their Divine Master—then, no matter how small their numbers may be, theirs is surely a prosperous church. True prosperity consists in pure piety, not in mere numbers. Growth in grace is to be desired. Growth in size is comparatively a small matter. But my honest belief is, that such a church as I have described, a church full of good men unmixed with bad, would actually grow faster in numbers, than any other kind of church. A few good seed will bring a larger crop than a large quantity of bad seed.

But finally, my brethren, let me say to you that, while it is the duty of all to keep the church pure, it is the first duty of each one to keep *himself* pure. You are much more responsible for yourself than you are for other people. Other people's conduct is, to a great extent, beyond your control; but your own conduct is just what you make it. I have said that you ought to exercise a kind but faithful

watch-care over one another; but above all things let each one watch himself.

Now, in order that you may better remember what I have said, I will repeat the substance of it. Holiness becometh the house of the Lord. This building, made with hands, should be kept holy. It should be used for none but holy purposes. The doctrines taught therein should be drawn from the holy of holies, that is, from the word of God. The ordinances administered here should be of divine appointment, and therefore holy; all customs, or ceremonies, other than these, have no authority, and are often mischievous, and always dangerous. The conduct of all your service ought to be decent, orderly, quiet, and reverent, in order to be in keeping with the holiness which becometh the house of the Lord. The spiritual house not made with hands should be kept holy. Evil doers should be cast out, and those that remain should be kept under affectionate and faithful and mutual guardianship. Nothing unclean should be admitted. The regenerate alone are proper candidates for admission into the Church of Jesus Christ. Holiness becomes the house of the Lord, and therefore it is the farthest possible remove from being a cage of unclean birds. A few true hearted, genuine Christiau men banded together are a great moral power. It is a frightful mistake to suppose that their strength can be increased by adding to their number from the ranks of the unconverted.

And, finally, the best way to keep the church in order, is for each one to keep *himself* in order. Divide out the labor. No man can carry the whole church. Let each one take his share; and each one's share is himself. If holiness becomes the house of the Lord, remember that above all it becomes the hearts of his people. And if not present *there*, all is lost.

I pray God, my brethren, that you may be able to render an acceptable service to him in this humble temple reared

with hands, which this day we dedicate to him, and that in due time, you, and I, and all the Israel of God, may be permitted to render a more perfect service in his glorious temple in an eternal world.

## SERMON XXIII.

### *THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.*

“O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”—PSALM xcvi. 9.

THE occasion which has called us together is of complex character. It is the Lord's Day, and requires of us that we should worship him in his holy temple, and render him that homage of the heart which is justly his due. It is furthermore the religious anniversary of an Institution of Learning, and therefore requires that so far as literary entertainment and instruction can be properly combined with services of higher and holier nature, it should be done. And as the Institution in whose interest we have convened is consecrated to female culture, it would seem to be proper that what is said should be adapted especially to the female mind, or at least suggested by the idiosyncrasies of female character.

Our text, it is thought, presents the truth in this unusual and felicitous combination. “O worship the Lord!” What could be more appropriate on this beautiful morning, this calm and tranquil and sacred day of the Lord? Before a great congregation like this, what so befitting as the exhortation of the Psalmist in the text, “O worship the Lord!” Yea, “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.” Let us rejoice that we are permitted to assemble in the house of God, and let the multitude, with the voice of joy and praise, keep holy day.

But the text not only enjoins worship, but a peculiar *kind* of worship; it speaks of the beauty of holiness, and requires worship clad in that glorious robe. This quality of holiness

—its beauty—is one which cannot be discussed without some metaphysical inquiry, nor appreciated without some degree of aesthetic culture ; and hence if it be proper *ever* to preach from this text, it would seem to be so on an occasion like this, which is not only religious, but *literary*. Taking another aspect of the case, whenever we think of the person or character of woman, we are led by a most natural law of association, to think of beauty ; or if we would win the attention or the sympathies of woman, we present to her contemplation that which her instincts lead her to love—beauty. So then on this day, consecrated to the Lord, consecrated also to the genius of learning, and consecrated to the cause of female culture, it is appropriate to reproduce the exhortation of the Psalmist, “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” The threefold character of the occasion, in itself a unit, is happily met by the text, whose threefold powers are so harmoniously blended by the sweet singer of Israel. No chord of David’s harp ever yielded a strain more appropriate to an occasion like this—a strain whose rich music is not merely melody, but harmony of three parts, all gushing out together from a single touch of the royal artist’s finger on the sacred lyre. In our atmosphere, the harp would not yield so rich a response ; but when David sat and sang, the Divine Spirit breathed, and as the string quivered, the holy afflatus seizing its vibrations, mingled them with infinite loveliness, and superhuman energy, and has thus brought them down through three thousand years to our ears, and will enliven with them the devotions of the saints till the end of time. Here we see David at one view in three characters ; not only as the devout worshiper of God, but as the philosopher, and as the poet. If our emotions are stirred by an appeal combining so many elements of power, we are but under the same impulse which moved the inspired penman. No less than three times is this text recorded in the sacred oracles. In the First Book



of Chronicles, sixteenth chapter, we read, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." In the Twenty-ninth Psalm, we read again: "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." And here again in the Ninety-sixth Psalm, we read the same, with this difference only, that, in this last instance, the wrapt Psalmist, warmed with his theme, and remembering perhaps that he was addressing millions unborn, prefixes the ejaculation, and in the fullness of his soul exclaims, O! "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

But, subduing emotion, let us endeavor calmly to inquire, What is the duty here enjoined? It will be observed that this is an exhortation, not merely to worship God, but to discharge that duty in a particular manner—in the beauty of holiness. If the Psalmist had only said, "Worship the Lord," he would have meant something; but when he adds, "in the beauty of holiness," he must mean something more. It becomes us then to inquire what more does he mean; what is the beauty of holiness, and in what does it consist?

It has been held by one class of thinkers, that this, and all kindred expressions, are figurative. With them, beauty exists only in physical objects, and is perceived only in certain modes, or manifestations of matter; and as the emotions excited by the perception of these manifestations are similar to, or identical with, some of the emotions which flow from moral sources, the same name has been applied to each. According to this objective, or sensuous, theory, beauty is found only in certain forms and colors, and other objects of sense; consequently, when the term beauty is applied to objects that exist only in the ideal world, it is used metaphorically. Thus, to illustrate, the taste of an apple affects us agreeably, and we call it sweet. Certain sounds also affect us agreeably, and by a figure of speech we say that they are sweet. Carrying the figure still further, we speak of a sweet sentiment, a sweet poem, or a sweet disposition. Just so, the

term beauty, on this theory, is applicable originally, and strictly, only to certain qualities in objects of sense; and is tropically transferred to another use, whenever we speak of beauty in thought, sentiment, or morals.

To this theory I do not agree. Another school of metaphysicians, founded thousands of years ago by Plato, but whose best exponent in modern times on this point, at least, is Cousin, teaches a deeper and better philosophy; which shows that the idea of beauty is transferred, not from the actual to the ideal, but from the ideal to the actual; that it exists, not without us, but within us; that it consists, not in manifestations of matter, but in manifestations of mind. According to this wiser system, the term beauty is applicable literally, originally, and strictly, only to things invisible, intangible, and ideal; and it is used metaphorically when applied to any thing else. In the case of the term sweet, as applied to a sentiment, we illustrate the moral by the sensuous; but in the term beauty, as applied to a rose, for example, we illustrate the sensuous by the moral.

Perhaps I can better develop the idea of the distinguished metaphysician whose theory has suggested this discourse by letting him speak for himself. Says he: "The inward alone is beautiful; there is no beauty except that which is invisible. Physical beauty, or the beauty of form and motion, is only the reflection of that moral and intellectual beauty which we may embrace under the term spiritual or unnatural beauty. Thus all beauty resolves itself into spiritual beauty. The real beauty of the Apollo was that uncorporeal beauty which shone through its veil. A man's face is effulgent with signs of morality, and *therefore* of beauty"; and, continues the philosopher, "the face of nature is expressive, like the face of a man." Thus much from Cousin himself. Expressing now the same thoughts in my own language, I would say that the beauty of the human face consists in the

shining forth through it of internal qualities pertaining to the spirit that inhabits it. So also the beauty of nature consists in the expression by it of certain qualities existing in him who is its Author; or who, without using the terms in a pantheistic sense, may be called the *Soul* of nature. Thus a rose is beautiful, not in itself, but only as it manifests certain sensibilities in him who fashioned it. That which we call its beauty is not really beauty, but is only an *expression* of beauty—an imperfect representation of certain qualities in the character of God—the embodiment of one of his own conceptions; and falling short of the reality, in the same degree that matter is inferior to mind—to that highest condition of mind which exists in the Almighty. Thus the ideal of beauty is the only real. The actual, which we see, is only a means, or medium, through which it faintly exhibits itself. *Beauty is a revelation.* It is a glimmering disclosure to us, through material objects, of the spirit-splendors of the all-creating Power. Blessed are the pure in heart, for even in this life, before they reach the holy place, in the face of nature, they see God. In the bow, in the cloud, in the storm, in the calm, in the brook, in the flood, in wreathing smoke, in solid rocks, in the stately forest, in the drooping flower, in bud and in blossom, in the birds of the air, in the fish of the sea, in the beasts of the field, in the Godlike form of man, in microscopic wonders, no less than in the starry heavens,—in all, *in all*, they see God. Every ray of beauty is but the reflection of gleams of glory from the light of his countenance. The Spirit of God flashes from the cloud. The Spirit of God is in the blush of the rose, it sparkles in the dew drop, it broods over the landscape, it fills the earth, the air, the sea, the sky. God is invisible, yet through matter we see Spirit.

It might have been asked a few moments ago, though scarcely now, “Of what use are these metaphysical inquiries?

What matters it to us sinful creatures whether the objective or the subjective theory of beauty be true? Surely all this is not very evangelical!" I reply, that whatever leads us to God *is* evangelical; and to teach a doctrine that he is in everything, that he reveals himself to us in everything, and that he can be *seen* in everything, is surely to bring us into closer communion with him. "Nearer to thee, nearer, my God, to thee!" I love that philosophy which brings me nearer to thee! I reply, further, that the theory which I have advanced, even though it be borrowed from the heathen Plato, is at least good philosophy; and wherever we find a true philosophy, there we find a foundation for a true religion.

In the present case, from what has been said, we deduce this important thought, that when David speaks of the beauty of holiness, he uses no figure of speech, but in literal terms enjoins a duty. If philosophy has supplied us with a correct exegesis, which we could not have reached without its aid, and has explained a passage of Scripture which we could not otherwise have understood, let us thank God for the philosophy. But what now does David mean when he calls on us to worship God in the beauty of holiness? He means that we should worship in such a manner as to exhibit, *by* the manner, qualities within ourselves which can be called beautiful. Thus we shall become objects of admiration to all pure and holy beings. As we kneel before God in prayer, or raise our voices in praise, a circle of invisible spectators may surround us, filled with emotions of the beautiful. They may gaze upon us in our devotions with rapture. As we stand around some glorious work of the sculptor's art, and behold with enthusiastic admiration in the life-like stone the beauty originating in the soul of the artist, which is expressed in the marble, so angels, with sublimer capacities for perceiving and enjoying the beautiful, seeing the saint on his knees,

behold with ecstatic admiration the heavenly beauty shining through the fleshly veil. In squalid poverty, clothed with rags and wretchedness, in some far-off hovel, abhorred by men and beasts, the child of God may lie, and be to mortal eyes an object of disgust; but in all his misery, remembering the preciousness of Christ, he says, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," and witnessing angels see beauty there that no language can describe and no mortal conception appreciate.

An assembly of devout men are convened in the sanctuary, on the Lord's Day, to worship God who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. A great congregation of invisible spirits fills the air, and the holy ones look down on the assembly with rapture. As we would look upon Eden, and feel that the sight of its beauties was too much for us, and be overwhelmed with excess of delightful emotion, so they look on this garden of delight spread out before them, with emotions such as none but angelic bosoms can feel, and there behold spirituality, which is beauty in its essence, blossoming out in acts of devotion, infinitely more lovely in this garden of the Lord than Eden's richest bloom. Says the Psalmist, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." No wonder he called it the perfection of beauty; and his sentiment accords with our philosophy when he speaks of God shining through this earthly veil. The beauty is *his*; Zion is the mere expression of it. In the earthly form we behold the efflorescence of the Divine Spirit.

Nor, changing the view-point, is it going too far to say, that God himself admires the devotions of the saints, when conducted in the beauty of holiness, and loves to contemplate them. Here again, Scripture and philosophy teach the same lesson. Says the Psalmist, "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." Here the beauty of Zion is said to be an object of *desire*, an object of desire with the *King*, an object of his

*great* desire. This thought will strike us with more force, when we remember that, if there be beauty in us, it is he who has placed it there; that if our spirits are pure, it is he who has made them so; that the saints are in fact his handiwork; or, in his own words, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." Now if the happiness of God consists in part of the contemplation of his own perfections, must he not regard, with delightful complacency, the manifestation of those perfections in his works? If he regarded with satisfaction the virgin world which his hands had made, and pronounced it *good*, with how much greater complacency must he regard that spiritual creation, made not by material changes, but by the blood of the atonement!

If we may descend from such conceptions to grosser things, imagine an artist to stand gazing on his master-piece for the first time after he had put upon it his last and finishing stroke. Think you not that his soul glows with admiration of that beauty which his work has developed? Others may admire it too, but can they admire as he does? Nay, none but he who produced could fully appreciate it. None but a mind capable of bringing it out could be capable of taking it in. The mere development of a muscle, or the turn of a finger, which untutored eyes would look upon with apathy, might manifest to the artist's finer perceptions beauty that would thrill every fibre of his soul with rapture. Thus, if at creation "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," how much less was their joy, finite and superficial, than the serene but infinite delight of the Creator, whose boundless capacities were alone adequate to take in all the glory! So, too, if angels and glorified spirits admire true devotion, it is with that lower kind of admiration which men without genius feel in viewing the products of genius. But when God admires the same object, he admires as the great Master-Artist who produced the

work, and whose capacious mind is alone expansive enough to receive all the rays of beauty that it reflects. If, in our devotions, beauty be upon us, it is "the beauty of the Lord our God" that is "upon us." If the "meek" are "beautified with salvation," it is the great Artist-Spirit who has infused into them the glowing element. As it all came from him, so it is all reflected back to him; while created beings stand off and admire, but not as he admires; they admire as they can what they see, but they see not all. What inducements are these to true devotion! In every such act we present an object of contemplation which fills superior beings with delight, and which is an object of great desire to the Great King in whose sight the very heavens are unclean. How can we help exclaiming to ourselves, and to each other, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!"

But it will naturally be asked, "How are we to attain to that spiritual estate which will enable us thus to worship?" To answer this question intelligently, let us remember that beauty exists only in the invisible, and in its perfection only in God. So, if we would worship him in beauty, we must be like him. But how shall we become like him? It may be responded, in general terms, by obeying his commandments, and conforming to the requirements of his gospel.

Most certainly those who do thus conform to his law, will, by the power of his Spirit, be conformed to his image, and be made as much like him as the nature of things in our present fallen state will allow; and in another world the resemblance will be made more perfect and more glorious. We know not, indeed, what we shall be, "but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

From the moment when the soul first begins to conform to God's law, to the end, there is perpetual beauty. The sinful soul repents, and there is beauty—beauty in the bud, and there is joy in heaven. He believes in the Lord Jesus,

and there is beauty—beauty blossoming out, and heaven rejoices again. He yields himself to the word which says, “Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” and there is beauty, such as angels doubtless witness with delight; such certainly as the Holy Ghost once did descend from heaven to bless. He walks in newness of life, and there is beauty, for which parallel fails and which cannot be illustrated. He struggles on through his Christian course, making his way on towards God with a whole world to clog him, and another world against him, which angels never did, for there are no restraints on virtue among them, and no obstacles between them and holiness; but he struggles on with a world hung around his neck, and with another world before him to be surmounted, and warring worlds both, thus exhibiting a heroism which in heaven itself is never witnessed, and there is beauty mingled with grandeur—a sublimity and a glory for which we have no name in this life. Doubtless, superior spirits, when they look down on the scene of strife, on the spiritual conflicts fought on battle-fields invisible to us, shout with exultant joy when they see the valiant Christian put sin and Satan to flight, and come out more than conqueror through him that loved him. But now his conflicts are over; he dies in the faith and peace of the gospel, and there is beauty. Oh, the beauty of the peaceful death-bed! No artist ever flung it on canvas, no poet ever breathed it in song; it is precious even in the sight of the Lord, and therefore outstrips all human expression and conception. Then he ascends and lives forever; and *there* is beauty such as God gathers around himself, to illuminate and glorify his own habitation, to be objects of his own admiration and complacency to all eternity. As an artist adorns his apartments with the productions of genius, and spends his time in the midst of them, deriving rapture from their contemplation, so God has filled his mansions in the heavens with pictures of



his own painting—pictures of himself, as imaged in his saints—pictures that have life, and heart, and soul; yea, with millions of spiritual essences, which are but so many forms of beauty, but so many expressions of himself by the Almighty; and as it was his pleasure to produce them, so also it is his pleasure to dwell with them, and enjoy them forever; while his living pictures also enjoy him forever.

But, in more particular terms, how are we so to conform ourselves to the character of God, that we may worship him in beauty? If we wish to follow a pattern, we must see what the pattern is. The character of God may be regarded in three aspects. In the first place, he is a holy Being; and under the term holy is meant to be included every moral excellence, conceivable and inconceivable. In the second place, God is an intellectual Being. His mental qualities are as infinite and as characteristic of him as are the attributes of his moral nature. The very words of Scripture declare that “his understanding is infinite.” If his ways are above our ways, it is because his thoughts are above our thoughts. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works,” says the Psalmist; “in wisdom hast thou made them all.” And no wonder that an apostle, in view of these works both of providence and of grace, exclaimed, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” But, in the third place, God is a Being of *taste*. I know that I am now treading upon ground almost strange to the theologian. It is not often that this phase of truth is presented from the pulpit, and not often that it ought to be. But it is legitimate, and this occasion furnishes happy opportunity for setting it forth. I congratulate myself on this, that there are occasions, though they come but seldom, which call forth certain aspects of truth, valuable in themselves, but which would not be appropriate to the ordinary services of the sanctuary. It is appropriate *now* to say, that God is an

æsthetic Being. If not, why did he clothe the lilies of the field in their gorgeous array, or trace its tints on the rose with pencil of light? Might not these, and other beautiful productions of nature, have answered their purpose as well without their beauty? And again: Man certainly has a perception of the beautiful. Whence did it come? If he who formed the eye can see, and if he who formed the ear can hear, shall not he who gave us a perception and a love of the beautiful, himself perceive and love it? He has imparted it to us. How could he impart that which he does not possess? Moreover, beauty must be good, for, if it were not, the Psalmist would not have enjoined it as a quality of our worship; and if good, it must exist in God, who is the embodiment of all that is good; and if it exists in himself, he must admire it; and if he admires it in himself, he must admire it in other beings and things; for in the possession of this quality they but mirror forth to his own view elements of his own character. In every form of beauty he must recognize his own features.

Here, then, is the pattern which we are to follow. God is a Being of holiness, of intellectuality, and of taste. Under these three may be grouped all the divine perfections imitable by us; and in happy correspondence with these is the division, by the philosopher already quoted, of his theme into "the good, the beautiful, and the true"; and the coincidence is the more striking because accidental. Doubtless the French thinker would himself be surprised to see that, in the good, the beautiful, and the true, he had unwittingly made an analysis of the imitable traits of the Almighty. By a symmetrical combination of these three in our own character, we shall reflect the image of God as perfectly as can be done by these broken vessels.

Let us then briefly inquire how each of these may be cultivated. Here I must say that, with regard to the first point,

at least, I must consider myself as addressing those who have already made their peace with God by believing on his Son ; for this is the first step, without which nothing could be of any avail. One of the best means for the culture of holiness is the study of the character of God. The mind becomes what it contemplates. Let it dwell upon goodness, and it will become good. This is the lesson that the apostle teaches when he says, that "we beholding the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image"; and again when he says, that "when he shall appear we shall be like him," the reason of which the apostle goes on to say is, that "we shall see him as he is." How important, then, that we should study his character *now*, that we may learn, as soon as possible, to see him as he is!

But it may be asked, "How can the contemplation of the character of God lead us to a knowledge of meekness, humility, and obedience, seeing that these things do not exist in him, and cannot, since there is no superior being towards whom he could exercise these virtues; while, at the same time, these things are essential elements of holiness as it exists among men; and there can be no beauty in any man's character who is destitute of them?" Happy am I to know that I can give an answer to every demand of this kind, however exorbitant. In the character of Jesus Christ is found every good quality which a human soul, filled with the Holy Ghost, could contain. He shows us what holiness is, not only as it exists in God, but as it may and should exist in human beings. If such an expression be allowable, almost painful in its plainness, he shows us what God would do, and be, if he were a man. A more fitting form of expression, perhaps, is this, that Jesus Christ was the embodiment of God's ideal of a perfect humanity. He was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," yet he was the son of *Mary*; he was a *man*, with human

powers of thought, and human finiteness of thought; for he grew in *wisdom* as well as in stature, like other children, and with human dispositions and weakness; for he was in all points tempted like as we are, only without sin, and in all things was made like unto his brethren. In him, then, being a man, yet supernaturally and incomprehensibly united with Divinity, the character of God is brought, as it were, to a level with our capacity. *Every* phase of *his* character is imitable, and in him we find every model we need. Here we have not only holiness, and wisdom, and every infinite excellence, as these things exist in the Almighty, but we have meekness, and gentleness, and obedience, and humility; and patient endurance of poverty, pain, hunger, thirst, obloquy, insult, persecution, and death. Let us then study the character of God, the eternal, infinite, and self-existent Spirit; and when we find that the essence of the All-glorious One too far transcends our capacities, then let us study his character as manifested in the person of his Son. To this humanized Divinity we can find nearer approach; and though we may never be satisfied with such approximations to the model as we can make in this life, yet the day will come when we shall be satisfied; for when we awake from the sleep of death, we shall "awake with his likeness."

I might name many other means for the culture of holiness, but I pass them by to notice another point. God is an intellectual Being. The man who is most intellectual, is in *that* respect most like God. It follows, as a consequence, that other things being equal, the man of mind, of cultivated mind, of mind at its best, can worship God more in the beauty of holiness than any other. The more we are like God, the more we glorify God; and this has reference not merely to any one point of his character, but to the whole of it, whether regarded as moral, intellectual, or æsthetic.

The same view may be sustained by another consideration.

God is certainly more glorified by an angel than by an insect. Now why is this? It can only be from the difference in the rank and capacity of the two creatures. The angel glorifies him from a perception and imitation of those qualities which exist in himself; the worm glorifies him to the extent of its capacity, yet scarcely more than inanimate matter. Apply the same principle to the subject in hand, and we see that our power to glorify God, increases commensurately with our other capacities. The man with ten talents may increase by ten, but the man with five can increase only by five. Here then is encouragement to mental culture; here is a motive to study. The inducements to this are for the most part represented as if they were wholly of a worldly nature, springing alone from temporal interests, proposing no other end than personal advancement, or usefulness in this life. But here is a motive of a higher order. In the holiness of the intellectual man, there is the more beauty; and in his devotions, the more that glorifies God and that is acceptable to him. Not that wisdom is essential to the acceptableness of our faith, for the weakest and most ignorant are welcome, and more than welcome; but merely that there must be a difference between worship that is intelligent and that which is not; and that, other things being equal, the difference is measured by the proportion of intelligence. In the matter of faith, for example, one man believes the word of God because it *is* the word of God, and because it is properly substantiated as such. Another believes God's word simply from a readiness, common to the ignorant and unthinking, to believe *any thing*. Surely God is not glorified equally by the faith of those two men,—one in the exercise of a rational belief, and the other in the exercise of an irrational credulity. Or again: one man may have eyes to see great wisdom in the plan of salvation; another may be so lacking in mind, or in culture, or in both,

as not to be able to see *great* wisdom in *any thing*. A poor half-witted creature, with barely mind enough to make him morally responsible, may accept the gospel, and be saved by it; yet it is but uttering a truism to say, that he cannot accept it as appreciatingly as the one who has better powers of appreciation. He then who would worship God in the beauty of holiness, must be like God; and the more he is like him, the more elevated will be the tone of his worship; and to be like God one must be not only holy, but intellectual. Hence the value of study; hence a new incentive to intelligent culture; and a new encouragement to founders of schools and colleges, and to those whose life-work it is to impart knowledge and to teach people to think. Hence the value of Mathematics, and Philosophy, and Logic, and whatever else tends to the development of mental power. An increase of mental power becomes, under sanctified influences, an increase of moral power. In every institution of learning, the pupil whose heart is renewed by grace is so instructed and mentally improved, as to be able to understand, and therefore to appreciate and appropriate and profit by, many of the teachings of God's word which must forever be a sealed book to the uneducated. Besides this, intellectual power gives one influence among men; and hence he is the more able to diffuse the precious grace; and thus he who is blest himself is himself a blessing. Even the pupil whose heart is *not* renewed is made more intelligent; and intelligence, if it does not pave the way to piety, paves the way to increase of it. Sometimes the preacher of the gospel is restrained from putting forth his best powers, because if he were to do so, he would be beyond the capacities of many of his hearers; and thus profounder views, and richer views, of gospel truth are hindered. The sincere milk of the word must be furnished copiously; its strong meat, which produces greater spiritual vigor, sparingly. How desirable that our powers should be

so strengthened that we shall be able to digest, not only the simplest forms of gospel truth, but also its strongest diet,—the most nutritious aliment that it affords. Then we should have not so many babes, but more strong men in Christ Jesus.

But I pass to another consideration. God, as already shown, is a Being of taste, and as also shown, is most glorified by those who are most like him. Consequently, and I think the logic is inexorable, the man of taste, other things being equal, can worship God more in the beauty of holiness than another. If a man be destitute of this quality, there are some of the rays of God's glory which he cannot reflect, and many of his works which he cannot appreciate. One man looks upon the face of nature, fraught as it is with beauty by the hand of him who made it, and seeing nothing to admire, admires nothing, and is destitute alike of emotion and of thought. God has displayed himself in beauty; but as to this man, the display is made to the blind. Another, viewing the same scene, sees manifestations of God's character in every flower, and every bud, and every leaf, and every springing blade, and every changing cloud; and hears whispers of divine music in the rustling leaves, or in the babbling brook, through the Æolian harp set in his ear; and, filled with delight in the midst of these exhibitions of glory, is brought into sympathy with the complacency of the Creator in view of his own works. Can it be that God is equally glorified by these two men? The one unintelligent, apathetic, not impressed by the great Artist of Eternity, and therefore, of course, wholly unimpressible and clod-like,—the other alive and quivering with intelligence, and burning with emotion, in view of those qualities of things which brought forth the benediction of the Almighty when he pronounced them *good*! Nay, he who is destitute of taste, and therefore, thus far, on a level with brutes, cannot glorify God as he

does who, by the possession of the Godlike sensibility, is raised to a more dignified rank of being.

Hence the value of æsthetic culture ; for taste, above all other things, is the last to exhibit itself without culture, and is equalled by few things in its susceptibility of culture. The ore embedded in the earth cannot reflect the light of the sun like polished steel, nor can taste, in its crude and natural state, reflect to heaven the rays of beauty that come from thence, until it be polished under the hand of culture. Hence the value of the fine arts. Hence the importance of studying rhetoric, and poetry, and music, and painting, and sculpture, and whatever else tends to develop a perception of the beautiful. Hence, too, the value of institutions *just* like this, where instruction is given in branches that are called ornamental, as well as those that are called useful. But I protest against the distinction which this popular phrase seems to indicate. That which is really ornamental is of necessity useful. Ornament, *real* ornament, excites taste ; and that which excites, develops it ; and development of taste makes us more like God, from whom it came ; infuses a new quality into our piety ; lends its charm, not only to our outer life and its surroundings, but flings beauty over holiness.

We see, then, that God is most glorified by the highest style of man, and that the highest style of man is one whose spiritual condition is symmetrically developed in the good, the true, and the beautiful—holiness, intellectuality, and taste. So, then, when David says in our text, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," he is enjoining upon us to devote every energy, to strain every nerve, to swell every muscle, to summon up all the powers vouchsafed to man, and to put every capacity to its best, in the service of God. It is only another form, and a highly poetic as well as philosophic form, of urging total consecration. The beauty of holiness can be attained only by the utmost culture of every talent



that God has given us. Every holy disposition is to be brought out, and burnished to its brightest. Every intellectual power is to be developed and invigorated, till it can grasp all the truth that God has placed within the reach of mortals. Every nice perception is to be cultivated till we can see all of beauty that God has revealed. When the hour for devotion has passed, we should study to improve our minds; and when the severer sciences become wearisome, let us devote ourselves to the lighter arts; and when the ordinary avocations of life demand our energies, there may still be an under-current of thought leading us on to the good, the beautiful, and the true; and thus, whatever we do, all will be done to the glory of God. Whoever neglects one of these cannot, in full at least, worship God in the beauty of holiness. The absence of a single grace breaks the circle without which there can be no perfection; and the three points that have been named, holiness, intellectuality, and taste, are the three which determine, as it were, with geometric precision, the circle of human capabilities. Let us, then, devote every talent, and every energy, to the service of the Lord, and consecrate to him every hour and every moment. Then, though years of sin, and sorrow, and sighing may intervene, yet at last shall our eyes "see the King in his beauty," and we shall be wholly conformed to his image. And when saint shall call to saint, and angel to angel, "O WORSHIP THE LORD," we and all the millions of the redeemed shall be able to worship him, as we cannot do now, "in the BEAUTY OF HOLINESS."

## SERMON XXIV.

### *THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS, PROMOTIVE OF MORAL COURAGE AND MENTAL POWER.<sup>1</sup>*

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."—Acts iv. 13.

CONSPICUOUS in the fore-ground is the boldness of Peter and John. These two men belonged to the lower order of society, and, until about this time, were as humble and obscure as any citizen in all Jerusalem. In our neighboring city of Augusta, there are a few humble men whose business it is, in the spring time, to catch the shad as they come up from the sea, and sell them to the citizens. Their calling is honest and honorable. Still, they are never met in what is called society; and their social, religious, and political influence is as small as that of any other class of men that can be found. To this class, or to a class corresponding to it, in Jerusalem, belonged Peter and John. They were dragged up before the highest dignitaries of the country in which they lived,—Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and all the kindred of a large and influential family. So powerful were this family and their adherents, that they controlled even Pilate and

<sup>1</sup> This sermon was delivered at the Annual Commencement of the University of Georgia, of which institution the author was, at that time, the Presiding Officer. It was afterwards delivered, with slight alterations, as a Baccalaureate Sermon at the University of North Carolina, and again at the University of Alabama, and again at Furman University, South Carolina.

Herod, backed as these were by the great Roman Government, and forced them to do what they did not wish to do. They were the power behind the throne, more potent than the throne itself, and in some respects, omnipotent, as it were, in Judea. They not only completely controlled the civil authorities, they were at the head of a great religious hierarchy; and besides all this, they were in full sympathy with the masses of the people, and also with the very rabble. This clique, in whom was centralized all the power of the country, had entertained a bitter, furious, mortal, and hell-inspired hatred of Jesus, whom, having hounded through life, they finally murdered by crucifixion, pretending, however, to have the authority of law for their diabolical proceedings. This Jesus (though they did not know it) was the Son of God; and on the third day he rose from the dead, as he had said that he would, and thus put the final stroke to the discomfiture of his murderers. By his resurrection, he demonstrated his innocence and their guilt, the truth of his claims and the madness of those who opposed them; and he showed that they had no power over his life, but that he had power over both life and death; and that he was their Master, and had been from the first.

The high priest and his friends were driven to frenzy. Worried and badgered by their own evil passions, as by a pack of hungry wolves; foiled in every direction by sharp pointed facts; defeated as men had never been before since the world began, and have never been since; disappointed and vexed, chafed, fretted, chagrined, irritated to the last point of human endurance—they were sensitive all over as men who had been flayed alive. The very mention of the *name* of Jesus threw them into paroxysms of fury. If any one spoke favorably of him and condemned them, of course it stirred up rage, delirious and diabolical, such as language would exhaust itself without describing. Nor was this

wholly unreasonable. They were committed, wickedly it is true, but none the less committed, to deadly opposition to Jesus, and felt in their hearts the same hatred after they had put him to death that they had felt before. If they had made a mistake, it was the greatest mistake in all history; if they had committed a crime, it was the greatest crime possible on earth. Human nature could not endure such an imputation as this without intensest anger, such as would exhaust all possibilities of indignation and wrath.

Before such a tribunal as this, filled with venom, stung with resentment, and armed with power, Peter and John were arraigned. They had spoken in the name of Jesus; not only so, they had professed to work miracles in that name, and had said, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." Chap. iii. 14, 15. Regard their judges; then regard their accusation. What should we expect from such men, or from *any* men under such circumstances? Humble plebeians over-awed by a haughty aristocracy; criminals in the presence of avenging justice; ignorant and unlearned men, whose want of culture was at once "perceived," at the mercy of skillful and cunning prosecutors; two friendless fishermen, confronting a majestic court, composed of infuriated rulers, backed by an infuriated mob. We should naturally expect that they would plead "Not guilty"; or that, if forced to meet the charges, they would try to apologize themselves out of their perilous position, or at least to say something in mitigation of their offence. No doubt Satan stood by, expecting to see the two poor men fall victims to his temptation. But to his infinite disappointment and disgust, and to the inexpressible amazement of priests and people, they did something more than *confess* the name of Jesus: they *avowed* it, and threw it tauntingly in the faces of

their prosecutors. Said Peter to them, "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel," thus singling out and distinctly describing the objects of his address: "Be it known to you all," making no exceptions; "and to all the people of Israel," challenging the mob as well as their leaders; "that by the name of Jesus Christ"—enough was said if not another word had been uttered, to explode mines of wrath and fury;—of "Nazareth," a descriptive phrase that only heightened rage; "whom ye crucified," charging the murder of the innocent to their very teeth; "whom God raised from the dead," oh, last extreme of human insult! Oh, height! Oh, depth of indignation! "Even by him doth this man stand before you whole." Yes, said Peter, facing the whole of them, "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ, of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole."

I remember the charge of the Light Brigade, when—

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
Into the jaws of death  
Rode the six hundred !  
Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Canon in front of them,  
Volleyed and thundered !  
Stormed at with shot and shell  
Boldly they rode, and well,  
Into the jaws of death,  
Into the mouth of hell,  
Rode the six hundred !

But it was done in the heat of battle. The blast of the bugle fired them; the shoutings of the captains encouraged them; the tramp of hoofs and the clash of sabres excited them; the demon of war was turned loose within them; the

very thunder of cannon shook up every passion within them to its hottest and fiercest flame; and heedless and reckless, they dashed to the charge. No disgrace was before them, but there was glory. No moral courage was needed, physical courage only; and in the desperation which was never felt except on the field of battle the charge was made.

But the two lone fishermen had no glory before them—nothing but disgrace, and the miserable death of malefactors. There was no excitement of battle, and no hot blood surging through their veins, and no six hundred to support them; but all unsustained, and in cold blood, and with public opinion to face, more terrific than the artillery of Balaklava, with Godlike courage, the two heroic men stood their ground and proclaimed the name, and the glory, and the resurrection, of Jesus! At the charge of the Light Brigade—

All the world wondered.

But at the sublime boldness of Peter and John, all hell wondered at a virtue which all its powers could not shake; and all heaven wondered at a moral victory such as no angel in the skies ever achieved, or ever was called on to attempt!

We have thus considered the first line of our text, which is in these words, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John." The next point to engage our attention is not expressed, but implied. When "they perceived," says the text, "that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled." The marvel was, not that they were unlearned and ignorant; for that, which was palpable enough, would be expected in men of their condition in life; but the marvel was, as is evidently implied, that in spite of their ignorance they were able to sustain themselves with a degree of power before which the high tribunal and all the people quailed. They called on no learned counsellor nor eloquent advocate to defend, or even to assist, them. They defended themselves; and if they did it with boldness, they also did it with

power; insomuch that no man dared to answer them. The prosecution, instead of claiming the conclusion, which it had the right to do, allowed the defence to have it—struck ignominiously dumb by the bold, and I may say aggressive, defence of two poor ignorant fishermen. These stood up, not like trembling culprits before an august tribunal,—the tribunal trembled before *them*! And instead of passing sentence on them, requested them to withdraw, that they might confer among themselves as to what should be done; and when they called them back, they entered up a *nolle prosequi*, and merely charged Peter and John to preach no more in the name of Jesus; to which Peter replied, in defiance, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard,” and there the matter ended.

We pass now to the third striking fact set forth in the text, which is expressed in these words: “They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” That is, they accounted for the boldness and the ability of the two fishermen, by the fact that they had “been with Jesus.” What a tribute to the character of the Crucified! They that hated him; they that murdered him; they who staked their all upon his death, and in whose nostrils his very name was a stench, when called on to account for sublime phenomena of mental and moral power,—were forced by their inner nature to trace the facts to the influence of Jesus! They confessed, not only that he was adequate to such exhibitions of spiritual might, but that those who had even been with him, on whom only his shadow had fallen, all unlearned and ignorant as they were, were developed into a grandeur of manhood before which nothing could stand.

These Jews of the Sanhedrim were specimen men; they seemed to have two natures, one of which warred against the pure and lovely Saviour, and the other of which forced them to yield him a reluctant homage.

From the facts before us let us eliminate a proposition. It is this: The knowledge of Jesus, promotive of moral courage and of mental power.

A sentiment just the reverse of this seems, to the thoughtless observer, to have taken possession of the world. Many seem to imagine that men embrace the religion of Jesus because they are cowards, and that even if its disciples were not cowards, the tendency of their religion is to make them so. Men pretend to believe that there is something about it incompatible with strong manhood. It answers very well, they pretend, for women and children, and old men, and sick men, and dying men, whose power is all gone; but as for young men in the elasticity of their youth, or full manhood in vigorous health, there seems to be something in it beneath their dignity. It is a great trial and humiliation to them to embrace a religion better adapted to trembling invalids and timid girls.

Men affect to think, too, that there is something of intellectual weakness in embracing the simple religion of Jesus; or, at least, that peculiar intellectual power is exhibited in rejecting it. How many pride themselves in their infidelity, and imagine that it gives evidence of mental superiority! How many sneer at the easy credulity of Christian faith, and imagine that their greater intellectual acumen and power require stronger evidence than satisfies the weak-minded disciples of Jesus!

In these sentiments, on the whole false and pernicious, there is a certain element of truth. It is the truth, and it is the glory of the gospel of Jesus, that it *is* adapted to the gentle, and the timid, and the fearful; to the sick and the dying; to the women and children; to the unlearned and ignorant; to the feeble-minded and imbecile. It is the only thing that *is* adapted to them. Blessed be God that it is adapted to them so well! It is an evidence of its divine



origin that it meets the wants of the little ones. God, who is the Father of us all, knows how to take care of his own, and leaves no class, however insignificant, unprovided for. He who guides the flight of the sparrow counts the very hairs on the heads of his little children, the least one of whom is of more value than many sparrows. The God who made the universe, and holds the planets in their places, is the God also of the animalcule, whose minuteness defies our microscopes. If he provides for these minute creatures, much more will he provide spiritual aliment for immortal souls. Philosophy addresses only the higher, yea the highest, order of mind; and for that very reason is fatally defective, in that it leaves the great mass of mankind forever uncared for and hopeless. Thank God that the gospel cares for and cherishes those on whom proud philosophy looks down with contempt, or at least with utter disregard; and that the *poor*,—the poor in purse, and the poor in intellect, and the poor in opportunity, as well as the poor in spirit,—thank God that, since the days of Jesus, “the poor have the gospel preached to them,”—a gospel which they understand, appreciate, and enjoy, and which leads them to eternal life after their fitful, sorrowful life of weakness and poverty is over!

But more than this: the gospel is equally adapted to the wisest, and greatest, and noblest of earth; aye, more than this again, and far more: it *makes* its disciples wise and great and noble; and out of the poorest human materials, develops the grandest character. Witness Peter and John, standing on an exalted eminence unapproached by the heroes of history. If Regulus went to certain death at Carthage, he had public opinion to sustain him—the most powerful support a man ever had. If his people were bathed in tears at his departure, he knew that their hearts were in throes of admiration at his unflinching integrity.

The two lone apostles stood their ground amid scoffs and

sneers and jeers, as well as amid threats, and facing dreadful death. But yesterday they were humble fishermen, as obscure as they were unlearned and ignorant. To-day, the Sanhedrim trembles under the power of their eloquence, and turns pale before their indomitable courage. Judge of the gospel by the work it does! Remember, too, that this same Peter was by nature so timid that he trembled in the presence of a girl who said, "thy speech bewrayeth thee"; and remember that out of such meagre material was developed the man who looked the fierce Jews in the eyes, and charged them to their teeth, and before the whole world, with the murder of the Lord of life, and proclaimed fearlessly the most offensive of all facts, that Jesus had risen from the dead. Again I say, Judge of the gospel by the work it does! Remember, too, that while the Jews instigated the crucifixion of our Lord, it was done by order of the Roman Procurator; and hence the imperial government at Rome was responsible for it. Peter was a citizen of that government, and yet fearless of Herod and of Cesar, as he was of the Jews, he called it murder. Judge of the gospel by the work it does!

On the occasion described by our text, it seems to have been taken for granted, as a matter of course, by all the multitude without a dissenting voice, that the mere fact that Peter and John had been with Jesus accounted for their wonderful boldness and power. Why is it, that that which was so readily agreed to then, is now the subject of dispute? Then, it was promptly conceded that the knowledge of Jesus developed mental and moral power. Now, the knowledge of Jesus is thought to be fit but for women and children, and the feeble and effeminate. How is this phenomenon to be accounted for? One would expect exactly the reverse. One would think that after the achievements of eighteen hundred years, the question would be settled, and that the power of the knowledge of Jesus would be beyond dispute. Has the spirit

of Jesus failed in the lapse of time to do what was expected of it, judging by what it did at first? Or did the people then make a mistake in accounting for boldness and power, by attributing it to the influence of Jesus? Or if that influence was potent then, did it expire with the first generation? Why is it that, after eighteen centuries of trial, the religion of Jesus has fallen into disrepute?

Am I called on to account for the fact? I respond by denying it. Nobody believes that the spirit of Jesus, and of his gospel, all gentle and humble as it is, is at all akin to the spirit of cowardice; on the contrary, everybody knows that it is the very embodied antagonism to it. Nobody believes that this results from, or produces, feebleness of mind; on the contrary, everybody knows that its tendency is to develop the greatest intellectual acuteness and energy. True, some men, yielding to the weaker and worse elements in their nature, refuse to join the ranks of the women and children and little ones of the Saviour. Youths of scanty manhood try to supplement their deficiencies by a half-way avowal (they are too cowardly for a complete avowal) of an infidelity which is more pretended than real. Men who have been long committed to the world, are ashamed to give up all, and lay themselves as living sacrifices on the altar of Immanuel. But in their hearts, every one of these poor victims of Satan believes that the gospel of Christ destroys all that is mean and pusillanimous, and brings out the sublimest graces, the noblest powers, and the most glorious manhood that human nature is capable of. Not only so: every one of them believes and knows that the spirit that they are of, the spirit of antichrist, develops the basest vices and the meanest qualities of mind and heart, that ever disgrace human kind. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Men of the world, and some of those who claim to be Christians, will sometimes forsake their princi-

ples, and for paltry pottage will sell a noble birthright. We have all seen such cases. But nobody believes that these men are imbued with the spirit of Jesus; on the contrary, everybody knows that his spirit, if they had possessed it, would have lifted them above such baseness, and made them incapable of it. Much as men may pretend to ridicule the religion of the unlearned and ignorant and imbecile, if they were in search of one who would adhere to principle, in defiance of even fire and faggot, they would select that one, whether learned or unlearned, male or female, old or young, who is most thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Jesus. No! The world has not changed its opinion since the days of Annas and Caiaphas. Eighteen hundred years have but confirmed the facts. It is taken for granted as readily now as then, that the best development of human nature comes from having "been with Jesus."

There are reasons in the nature of things, why the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ should have this effect on character. Regarding ourselves as mere intellectual beings, it elevates and advances us, because it supplies us with *truth*. Truth is the best aliment that the mind can feed upon. The mind must feed upon something, and there are only two things within reach; one is truth, the other is falsehood. The one is unwholesome and pernicious, and is furnished to us by the father of lies, and the enemy of our souls. The other is wholesome, nutritious, and delicious, and is furnished to us by the Father of our spirits and the Author of life. What is better calculated to bring out mental muscle than truth? It may be said that mathematics and other sciences teach us truth. So they do, and this is the very reason why they are valuable to us.

But the gospel has this advantage: that it familiarizes us with truths that are peculiarly *elevating*. It teaches us the nature and character of God; it leads to the contemplation

of the Infinite; not to the infinite in the abstract, as some of the sciences do, but to the infinite in the concrete; and it is the only science which does teach of the infinite as embodied in a perfect, Eternal Person. It teaches not only of infinite wisdom and power, which Science points to, but does not demonstrate; it tells of infinite justice and goodness and love and condescension, which Science knows nothing of. It not only opens new fields of thought, but introduces us to new and sublime regions, to which the genius of Science, in its loftiest flight, never soared. No man can meditate on the truths of the gospel, without being elevated in mind, as well as in morals. The very thought of truth, of *any* truth, expands and ennobles; but what shall we say of gospel truth, which is an infinite enlargement upon all other truth?

The influence of the gospel is also of peculiar intellectual value, because it supplies us with *fundamental* truth. Our knowledge of the superstructure is of little avail, unless we know something of the foundations. Science teaches us but little of the truth that lies at the bottom; but the book of God, which is only another name for the religion of Jesus, teaches those great truths from which all others flow. Destroy the truths of the Bible, and there could be no value in all that would be left. If the superficial teachings of human science develop intellectual power, the more deep-lying and the more far-reaching truths of the Bible must exert the same influence, only in far greater degree.

The gospel also inculcates *varied* truth. Its combinations are almost infinite. I might almost say that there is scarcely a thing within the range of human knowledge, the germ of which is not in the Bible; and if this is not true to the letter, there is at least enough in it to excite our admiration, and our amazement. Some one has said that the Bible and Shakespeare contain almost everything that has ever been said or thought by men; and I may add, that if the inspi-

ration and instruction that Shakespeare received from the Bible had been denied to him, his genius would have been far less prolific. The endless variety of the contents of the Book of God, has never been measured, and never will be. How often, when reading a passage for the hundredth or perhaps the thousandth time, we discover some valuable truth, perfectly obvious and lying right on the surface, which we never saw before, and on a subject too, which we never dreamed was treated of or hinted at in the sacred volume. Posterity till the end of time will, doubtless, meet with many a surprise of the same kind; nor will the world last long enough to exhaust the teachings of the Book of books.

What gives its instructions the higher value, is that they are so *practical*. They relate to all the affairs of every-day life; they descend to the minutest details; they run out into the most fibrous ramifications; they ascend to the loftiest heights; their wisdom is infallible; nothing human has ever approached it; and it may be safe to say that there is nothing taught in the whole Book which is not of practical value in this present life. It is the most intensely practical of all books. Even a book of mathematics sometimes runs off into the regions of the unknown and unknowable, and teaches doctrines which can never be applied to any subject whatever. The great epic of Homer, whose original genius is said to have furnished the germ of all the poetry that has been written since his day, might be perfectly familiar to a man's mind, and yet leave him with but little sagacity in the affairs of this matter-of-fact life; but he who should familiarize himself equally with the Psalms of David would find infinitely finer poetry, and, at the same time, as much worldly wisdom as could be written in an equal amount of the sternest prose. He who would conform his life to the teachings of the Book of Proverbs, or to those of the Sermon on the Mount, or to those of the Epistle to the Romans, to say nothing of the

unmeasured, and immeasurable wisdom to be found in all the rest of the living oracles, would be considered by practical men, whether men of the world or not, as one of the wisest and most sagacious of his race.

We have seen that if to be with Jesus develops intellectual power, there are reasons for it. It is because it familiarizes our minds with *truth*, with the most *elevated* and most *elevating* forms of truth, with *fundamental* truth, with *varied* truth, and with *practical* truth. Where can we find anything so well adapted to our mental wants as this? Where is there another diet so wholesome and so strength-giving? If all the books in the world were to be destroyed but one, which one would it be best to keep? Which one would come nearest to covering all the ground, and to meeting all the wants, mental and moral, of human nature? In which one is there the greatest concentration of knowledge and wisdom, of good morals, and even of pure taste? In which, such encyclopedic variety of all kinds of excellence? In which, such condensation of all that is valuable? In which, such expressed essence of the very best thought attainable by human minds? In which, too, such literary beauty? No man is so wise, but that the knowledge of Jesus will make him vastly wiser. No man is so ignorant or so feeble-minded, but that the knowledge of Jesus will put him in such position that he will command no small degree of respect wherever a pure and lofty intelligence is appreciated.

Witness Peter and John. When the people saw such power in unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled. But the marvel ceased when they remembered that these peasants of Galilee had been with Jesus. Association with him was more than a substitute for the teachings of the schools; and Annas and Caiaphas pronounced in advance the judgment of future generations. But one opinion has prevailed for eighteen hundred years, though others have been broached

and vainly urged, and that opinion is this: "The knowledge of Jesus, the best of sciences."

Leaving this view of the subject, let us observe that there are reasons in the nature of things why companionship with Jesus should develop our *courage*. The boldness of Peter and John is but a specimen of the boldness of all who have been as near to Jesus as they had been. He who walks side by side with the Saviour is always in the *right*. Of all the sources of power over one's self and over others, none perhaps is so great as consciousness of right. It makes a man immovable, invincible, irresistible. So it is, so it ought to be, so it must be. If a man can say as Jesus did: "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these do ye stone me?" he can face those who thirst for his blood and not be afraid. If they actually stone him, as they did Paul, he will have the courage, as the apostle had, to go straightway and do again the very thing for which he was stoned. Of if, like Stephen, he is stoned to death, he can, like the proto-martyr, turn his manly breast to the murderous rock, and lifting up his hands to heaven, say: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"; and if his face should shine like an angel's, it would be but the flash of the spirit through the clay. "Conscience," says the great poet of human nature, "conscience doth make cowards of us all." Verily, indeed, a guilty conscience does; the poet was right, and by implication teaches, in this pithy line, exactly what this morning's lesson teaches, that a *clear* conscience makes *heroes* of us all. A pure heart is always a brave heart. If not pure, there is always a weak spot in it; and in some emergency it will be sure to fail. The dipping of Achilles in the Styx made him invulnerable except in the heel; but in the heel was an unprotected spot which always kept fear awake, and through which at last the poisoned shaft brought death. A heart baptized in purity, which is but a synonym for the name of



Jesus, makes the man invulnerable all over, and fearless all through.

Mere bravery, physical courage as it is called—which is nothing more than forgetfulness, or at least disregard, of personal danger—is often found in bad men. But they have nothing to boast of in this. It is a quality which they share with brute beasts; and taken in the abstract, unaccompanied by moral principle, it is mere brutality, a disgrace rather than a credit. It is seen only in the lowest of our species. Frequently what passes for it is sheer cowardice. Many a man has exposed his breast to the bullet simply because he did not dare to face the opinion of those whom he knew to be fools, and has died on the field of *dishonor*, as it ought to be called, a martyr to his own cowardice. From soldiers of unquestionable valor we learn that much of what passes for bravery on the battle-field is cowardice. Men rush on, because they are afraid to rush back and afraid to stand still. The greatest safety is in the charge; and hence in what seems to be heroic, and which *is* heroic with the real men, the greatest cowards sometimes make the best speed. The bravery of bad men is but a suspicious virtue at best; and a man must be at a loss for something on which to plume himself, when he boasts of that of which a dog, if he could only speak, might boast of just as well.

The man Christ Jesus had moral courage enough to lead a life of perfect virtue,—a greater test perhaps of heroism than to endure the blood-sweat of Gethsemane, or the terrors of Calvary. In him was manhood, the only perfect manhood the world ever saw. The nearer we press to him, the more we shall be like him. Nothing but the consciousness of right, which flows only from fellowship with him, can inspire that true courage which none but moral beings can exercise, and which only is worthy of a man.

For another reason, companionship with Jesus divests men

of fear. So long as they walk with him, they know that they have God on their side. Men may prate of boldness independently of God, but it is a fictitious boldness; there is no reality in it; and if there were, it proves nothing more than the folly of those who pride themselves upon it. He who walks with Jesus walks with God, and can always say, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do unto me?" He who has been with Jesus knows that the great Teacher said, "Fear not them that kill the body," and in substance, that those who fear God, and show their fear by keeping his commandments, need fear none else. If his enemies compass him about like bees, as numerous and with stings as sharp, yet he says in the language of the inspired poet: "They are quenched like the fire of thorns; in the name of the Lord will I destroy them." If he is obliged to say, as the Psalmist did, "My soul is among lions," yet so composed and serene is he that, though beset with monsters, he can say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." No man who is not imbued with the spirit of Jesus can feel the assurance of divine favor and protection, which is like an impenetrable ægis to the Christian, and no man without this assurance can possibly exercise the boldness of him who has it.

But there is another reason in the nature of things why the fellowship of Christ will make a man of a man, and fill him with courage. That glorious Person who taught by example, as well as by precept, develops by his influence all those other graces which are the basis of genuine courage, and without which it cannot exist. Adherence to principle, fidelity to truth, obedience to God, love to man, abnegation of self, disregard of life if necessary to sustain the right, contempt of the world when it would lead astray, and the hope of a future life,—these were the things that Jesus inculcated, these were the virtues that he practiced. To be with him, to

know him, is to admire and love and *imitate*. In the exercise of these graces by his people is involved the boldness which Peter and John exhibited, and which marks the true disciple. Take away these constituent elements from courage, and there would be nothing left.

What religion is there, or what philosophy, that can bring out the sublime courage that is involved in the spirit of Christ? Aside from religion and philosophy, can human nature, unaided and untaught, attain to a pure heroism? No! The race is a race of cowards. True, men will fight; but will they keep *from* fighting? Here is where the high courage of the gospel comes in. The highest courage ever exercised or required in this world is the courage to do *right*. I do not know that I overstate the truth if I say, that the grandest moral power ever exercised in the universe of God is the power, in spite of depraved nature, and in spite of the powers of darkness, to do right. Human nature is not inclined to the right; its tide rushes like a flood in the opposite way. No philosophy teaches the right. No religion presents the pure morality of the New Testament; and none ever practiced it but Jesus Christ, and none ever approximated it except those who *imitate* his example.

Whenever, then, in these latter days, we see men exhibit apostolic boldness; or when we see them, in spite of ignorance and opportunity, raised to the peerage in the realm of high character and intellect—things not uncommon,—we may know now, as well as it was known eighteen hundred years ago, that they have “been with Jesus.”

The reasons now may be obvious which have induced me, on this occasion, to hold up the unlearned and ignorant as models for imitation. It may have appeared to some that I was unhappy in the selection of a theme; that, on an occasion like this, the Sabbath anniversary of an institution of learning, consecrated to literature and to science, I ought to have

taken examples of an opposite character ; that it would have been more in keeping with the spirit of the institution, and of the occasion, if I had selected some topic in connection with the accomplished and cultivated characters of sacred history ; that I might better have spoken of Moses, who was acquainted with all the arts and sciences known to the Egyptians, some of which are to this day unknown to us ; or of the accomplished Luke, at once an artist, a physician, and a historian ; or of the gifted and learned apostle to the Gentiles, who outshone his master, Gamaliel, whose name seems to have been in his day a synonym for the highest culture.

Why have I passed by these illustrious examples, and selected in preference the obscure fishermen of Galilee ? The former represent human learning as well as the better wisdom which is from on high ; the latter represents nothing but the knowledge of Jesus. I select these to show by the example that this knowledge is paramount ; that all other knowledge without this is worthless. If forced to the dreadful alternative that either must be dispensed with, the knowledge which the University represents or that which made heroes of Peter and John, then I say, Perish the University ! Let the right hand of human art forget its cunning, let the tongue of human knowledge and wisdom cleave to the roof of its mouth ; but let the gospel of Jesus be preached forever and ever ! If the choice must be made, then I, for one, bid adieu to the philosophers of the world, from Plato down to Huxley, and choose my lot with the unlearned and ignorant Peter and John. I rejoice in an appropriate opportunity thus publicly to declare, although myself a teacher of human science, and a disciple of Aristotle as well as of Jesus, that all learning fails of its highest end unless it be sanctified, and that fellowship with Jesus is the best means of mental and moral development.

No passage that I have found in all the Scriptures

furnishes so inviting an occasion to show the contrast between the knowledge of Jesus and all other knowledge, as that which I have chosen. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." I thank God for the opportunity furnished me both by the occasion and by the text, occupying my position as the Chancellor of the University of Georgia, and as the representative of the learned Faculty, to make my profound obeisance to the unlearned heroes of Galilee, because they had been with Jesus, and had imbibed so much of his spirit as to make them worthy the admiration of mankind. As the standard bearer of the University, the home of science, literature, and the arts, I reverently dip the colors, in homage to the more glorious banner of Jesus!

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## ADDRESS.

*Young gentlemen of the graduating class:*

You have been instructed, since you have been with us, in your own language, in ancient and modern tongues, and in the philosophy of all tongues; also in mathematics, and physics, and metaphysics, and chemistry, and astronomy, and geology, and various other sciences; and on the Lord's Day by various ministers in the principles of the Christian religion. If I must put the finishing stroke to your education, before you depart; if I must put the cap-stone on the structure reared chiefly by my accomplished colleagues, let my last lesson of instruction be this:

In the first place: Remember, that taking our immortal career into the account, all human knowledge is worthless without the knowledge of Jesus; nay, worse than worthless. It will increase your responsibility, and if not guided by the spirit of Jesus, it will be as a millstone to your neck in a

future world. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Powers developed under instructions such as you have received, if consecrated to God, are a glorious blessing; but if perverted and abused, as all powers are that are not devoted to Christ, they will only add bitterness to future sorrow, and depth to future woe.

In the second place: Let not the fact that you have been permitted to receive here a certain polish under the hand of culture lead you to look down upon those who have the misfortune to be unlearned and ignorant, especially when they are the disciples of Jesus. Such men—that is, men who have attained to this best of sciences—all the world ought to look up to. Whatever their shortcomings in other respects, they are possessed of the great mystery of Godliness, whose glorious secrets far surpass all human wisdom, and are worth more than ten thousand times ten thousand sciences.

In these last words that I shall speak to you, I pray you to *be men!* It takes something more than time, something more than mere maturity, to make a *man*. Whether you will or will not be men, depends on yourselves. Let there be nothing shallow or fictitious about your manhood; let there be no veneering of manly graces over an unmanly heart; let all be real, genuine, and solid. Be men! and remember that there is no such thing as full-grown manhood—manhood at its best—without the knowledge of Jesus. Be men of courage, of high courage, of dauntless courage, of courage that will be a marvel to all who witness it. Remember that there can be no courage, in the high and noble sense of that term, unless it springs from a sanctified heart. You are entering into the battle of life. Be brave; I beseech you to be brave! The bravest men follow close to the captain. Jesus Christ is the Great Captain, whose lead, if you follow, you will prove yourselves to be men—men indeed, and worthy of the victory which you will be sure to achieve.

Since you have been here you have been taught the value of books. Remember that the libraries of the world are as nothing compared to the Book of books. By contemplating the character and teachings of Jesus, as there set forth, you will be assimilated to the glorious Exemplar, to him who only has shown how sublime a thing it is to be a man. If you would be men, you can be so in fullest measure only by being with Jesus; and the best place to find him is in his word.

Keep company through life with none but the good and the pure. If it is good to be with Jesus, so also it is good to be with his people; by contact with them, you are brought near to him. Let all your associations and sympathies be with the righteous; and, if your affectionate relationship to them is real, you will not be separated from them in the world to come. I do not believe that a real lover of the people of God ever was lost.

Seek Jesus in the sanctuary, for there is where his honor dwelleth. Seek him in the closet, for there is where communion with him is closest. If you would be men of true valor, be men of prayer. If you would bring your intellectual manhood to its best, be men of God.

It is related in classic fable that Antæus, the son of Earth, was engaged in dreadful conflict with the god of strength. The latter, being his overmatch, hurled him to the ground. But as he touched the bosom of Earth, his mother, she imparted to her son fresh strength, and he rose, more vigorous than before, to renew the conflict; and it was only by keeping him away from this strength-giving breast that he was finally overcome.

In our conflicts with the great adversary, when we find ourselves giving way, let us remember the power of them who had been with Jesus; let us fall on his breast, and we shall receive strength, not from earth, but from heaven, that will bring us off more than conquerors. With Jesus, we are

invincible; without him, we are lost. Having been with him in spirit through life, we shall be with him in the life to come.

My sons! I pray you *be men*. Jesus Christ himself is the model man. . But if you would have other examples of magnificent manhood, I point you, not to the warriors, and philosophers, and statesmen whom the world applauds, but to those humble, obscure, and unlearned men, whose boldness and whose wisdom proved that they had "been with Jesus"; and in the spirit world, may we all be forever "**WITH JESUS**"!



## SERMON XXV.

### *OLD AGE AND DEATH.*<sup>1</sup>

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened; and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. . . . Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”—ECCLESIASTES xii. 1-7, 13, 14.

THE exposition of this passage of Oriental prose-poetry, which is about to be given, is the same as that which may be found substantially, though in various forms, in books,—in books with which the world is familiar. All that can be claimed for the present discourse is, that it is presented in the speaker's own way,—distilled through the alembic of his

<sup>1</sup> A Sunday afternoon lecture to University Students; and this may be the apology for the Latin quotations.

own mind,—and that some of the combinations, and perhaps some of the thoughts, may be new.<sup>1</sup>

Doubtless, thousands have read and admired this chapter, without the slightest conception of the meaning of many of its expressions. They perceive in them a wild beauty, without being able to define it; a mysterious meaning, of which they apprehend just enough to please the fancy, and excite the imagination, but not enough to inform the understanding. Even when thus imperfectly understood, there is in the chapter much of beauty, much of solemnity, much of pathos, and much of sublimity.

I remember reading once in my early years a work of fiction, which closed with these words, "The silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken." I did not know that the words were taken from the Bible. I had not the slightest idea of their meaning; but they affected me deeply—perhaps to tears. They seemed to me to be a beautiful figure of some heart-rending catastrophe. They spoke of joys past and sorrows present, of bright hopes and bitter disappointments. The loosening of the silver cord figured to me the giving up of some cherished prize; the broken pieces of the golden

<sup>1</sup> There is no passage of Scripture in regard to the *general* meaning of which commentators are more unanimous; and no passage, perhaps, in which, as to matters of *detail*, there is more diversity of opinion. The most learned expositions that I have seen are those of Professors Stuart, Zöckler, Hengstenberg, and Delitzsch, with neither of whom have I been able, in some instances, to agree. Standing alone, I should scarcely dare to differ with either of these distinguished scholars; but they differ so widely with each other that neither is authoritative; nor do I perceive that they have greatly improved on the critics of long years ago. The truth is, that the obscurities are to be interpreted by the imagination rather than by scholarship, and hence the field is open to all. As to the scope and intent of the passage, taken as a whole, there is not the shadow of a doubt; hence if I have erred in particulars, I have certainly not erred as to the great lesson which the writer of the chapter intended to teach.

bowl lay scattered before me, as the wreck and ruin of that which was loved. Thus, without the least conception of what was in the mind of the writer when the words were written, I still enjoyed them. So it may often happen that, while our conceptions are exceedingly vague and shadowy, they may still be comforting and valuable. The ill-instructed and the ignorant may have very dim conceptions of divine truth, and an undefined view even of the saving truths of the gospel, and still be the happier and the better for them; and all of us who love God are delighted in spirit when we think of him, and are always elevated in spiritual life by communion with him, while at the same time we know that our best ideals of him are imperfect and utterly inadequate. But the more we know of him, the more we appreciate him; the more we know of anything, the more we enjoy in it that which is enjoyable. As to the chapter before us, the more intelligently we read it, the more we shall see in it to admire, and the more we shall be impressed by its teachings.

The chapter, taken as a whole, is a poetic and allegorical description of old age and death. The decrepitude, the infirmities, and the wretchedness of old age, described in literal and graphic terms, would surely not excite our perception of the beautiful; and the object itself we should not suppose would awaken the genius of the poet. Virgil indeed does say:

Fortunate senex ! hic inter flumina nota,  
Et fontes sacros, frigus captabis opacum,  
Hinc alta sub rupe, canet frondator ad auras,  
Nec tamen interea raucæ, tua cura, palumbes,  
Nec gemere æria cessabit turtur ab ulmo.

But while his address is to the happy old man, his description is of the landscape, and of rural pleasures, heightened by rural sounds. He was too wary to risk his beautiful but not inspired verse on the failing powers and shattered constitution of old age. Shakespeare is more bold, and actually

describes the painful sight of a man drivelling in octogenarian infancy, and falling helpless into the arms of death.

The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side ;  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank ; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange, eventful history,  
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything !

In this vivid description all is striking, but all is revolting ; there is no tenderness, no pathos, no sublimity. Indeed, there is a most unpraiseworthy want of that affectionate reverence which is due to the venerable patriarch, bowed down by the weight of many years, and like the shock of corn ripe for the sickle and ready to be gathered by God's harvesters into the great garner-house, where the mortal puts on immortality. It is interesting to notice the immeasurable distance between the inspiration of unaided genius, and the inspiration of genius, with divine inspiration superadded. Even as unpromising a theme as that of human life in its last stage is charmed into beauty, and touches the tenderest heart-strings, and awakens sentiments both deep and delicate, and at the same time inspires emotions, sad and solemn, but elevating, by the genius of the royal poet and sage of Israel.

Cicero, it is true, in his charming essay, *De Senectute*, breathes a much more amiable spirit than Shakespeare ; and his meditations are as wise, and as comforting, as could be expected from a heathen philosopher ; nay, more so ; and he was perhaps indebted for some of his views to these very living oracles which lie before us. But Cicero, while he had the highest order of talent, was not a man of genius, he was not a poet, he was not a man of God. His extended essay

contains not a tithe of the knowledge, nor of the wisdom to be found in these few lines of Solomon<sup>1</sup>; and to affect the heart it is powerless. The contrast, between his essay and the brief chapter before us, is the contrast between knowledge and ignorance; between diluteness and concentration; between poetry and prose; between pathos and apathy; between solemn warnings that can never be forgotten, and well-sounding, but insipid platitudes. The essay, *De Senectute*, read before this chapter, makes an impression favorable to the writer, but not strongly as to his subject; read after this chapter it makes no impression at all, unless it be the impression of disappointment.

But now let us look to the particulars. The expression: "While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh," is a specimen of the parallelism which characterizes Hebrew poetry.<sup>2</sup> A favorite method with the Hebrew poets was to repeat a sentiment with varied phraseology. Illustrative of this is the speech of Lamech to his wives, when he said: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man, to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." Innumerable instances of like kind might be adduced similar to the ex-

<sup>1</sup>Scholars are divided in opinion as to the authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes, but I have adhered to the long established opinion that it was written by Solomon. The great objection to the opinion that Solomon was the author of the book is found in the fact that certain words and linguistic peculiarities occur in it which were not in use in the Solomonic age. This may be because we have not the book in the dialect in which it was written. We have even a stronger instance of this kind in the Gospel by Matthew, which was probably written in Hebrew, while we have it only in Greek. But whoever the author of Ecclesiastes may have been, he was a man of rare genius, and undoubtedly inspired. The canonicity of the book has seldom been called in question.

<sup>2</sup>The Book of Ecclesiastes is a book of philosophy rather than of poetry; but this passage is certainly poetic.

pression: "While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh," where the second phrase is but the echo of the first. In English poetry the lines are often made to rhyme in sound; in Hebrew poetry the rhyme is in the sense. "When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh" is simply a rhyme.

The picture of old age is adroitly relieved of its unpleasant feature, by the fact that it is a present presentation of the future portraiture of the person addressed, and not of another. Being thus brought home to the man, and fastened on himself, it disarms irreverent criticism, and inclines to lenience and forbearance. "When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when *thou* shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." The description is first brief, and in generic terms, of a period when there is no pleasure. There is no positiveness in this statement; it is simply a negation. Old age is represented merely as a state in which the enjoyments of life are over. But in the next verse, the expressions are more positive as well as more specific, and the poet speaks of the particulars which are the cause of failing pleasure.

"While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened."

In this indirect and delicate way, the poet refers to failing sight. He does not mean that the sun, and the moon, and other luminous bodies, are actually darkened, but only that they seem so to one of weakened vision. Thus, with an expertness known only to genius, is the subjective translated into the objective, and the actual condition of the man set forth by the seeming condition of outward things. Nothing appears to the old as it does to the young. The grass is not so green, nor the sky so blue, nor so bright, nor the flowers so gay, nor the mead so inviting, nor even the sun so glorious, as to the eager and inquisitive and easily delighted eye of youth. All these objects of sight lose their charms, one by

one, until finally the very sun may be said to be darkened.

“Nor the clouds return after the rain.” When the rain has ceased, we look for sunshine and bright skies; if the clouds return, we feel disappointed; and if this should be often repeated, it is apt to superinduce general gloominess and dejection of spirits. Under this figure the writer describes the constantly recurring infirmities and disappointments of declining years. One pain is relieved and another takes its place—the clouds return after the rain. One bereavement or other misfortune is endured, and as the sorrow is about to pass away, there is a moment of hope; but the clouds return and another affliction is on hand. Thus not only some, but *all* “days must be dark and dreary.” By a single stroke, by a mere touch of the artist’s pencil, he has brought on that which, after many words of explanation, is not so vivid as when he simply said: “The clouds return after the rain.”

“In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble.” Under the figure of a house, the human body is referred to as the habitation of the soul; and by “the keepers of the house” is meant the hands and arms, which are its chief protectors and defenders. There is no coarse and bald description of the palsied hands and shaking limbs, but under the image of brave men, trembling under an overwhelming burden, is the idea presented to the imagination.

“The strong men shall bow themselves.” The fact is not mentioned in literal terms that, as years advance, the stature diminishes. The reason of this phenomenon is, that the joints approach each other, by the drying up, or rather by the failing supply, of lubricating fluids; the muscles become flaccid, and fail to hold the frame closely together; and as these and the sinews loosen, the lower limbs become bent, outward, or inward, or forward; consequently the erect

attitude of youth is gone, and the old man is bowed down. All this is expressed by the royal writer in the words, "the strong men shall bow themselves."

"The grinders shall cease, because they are few." The figure is of those grinding at the mills by hand, in companies, and one after another leaving until all are gone. Reference is had to the teeth, which disappear as one grows old, until, finally, the natural preparation of food for the stomach must cease entirely. The literal fact is painful to contemplate; the figure used to describe it is simply saddening but not offensive.

"And those that look out of the windows shall be darkened." It has been supposed that this refers to the eyes, as these are the windows which open from the soul to the outer world. But there are two objections to this: 1. Failing sight has been already spoken of, and the present expression is too far from the first to be regarded as its parallelism. 2. It is not the window itself that is darkened, but those who look out of it. Hence, I suppose that it refers not to physical, but to mental vision. The power of clear conceptions, and consequently of drawing nice distinctions, becomes sensibly weakened in the late decline of life. Men not only fail to see clearly, but they fail to think clearly. These internal powers of thought are they that look out of the windows upon the objective world, and it is they that are darkened. That this is the proper interpretation appears probable, from the fact that, if this expression does *not* refer to decaying mental powers, then that peculiar infirmity incident to old age is left out altogether; for there is no other expression that refers to it; and it is not to be supposed that Solomon would omit so conspicuous an item.

"And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low." It has been said that this refers to the fact that, as age advances, men keep out of the



streets, and are stayers at home. I do not believe that this is the correct interpretation. When is it that the doors shall be shut in the streets? It is when the sound of the grinding is low. This shows that the loss of teeth is what causes the doors to be shut in the streets. The mere loss of teeth would not cause one to stay at home; and for this reason I think that the common interpretation is wrong. That which is spoken of as streets must have some connection with the teeth. The expression "doors shut in the streets" must mean the failure of something which depends on the teeth. It may refer to the powers of digestion; the stomach and bowels being compared to streets; and the doors or gates being shut simply imply that these important viscera, being not supplied with proper material, assume abnormal conditions, and cease to perform their functions.

"And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird." Insomnia is a common complaint with the aged. It is the well-known habit of such persons to wake early in the morning. Their nights are tedious, and wearisome, and they long for the approach of day; and if they fall into light and momentary slumber, they awake at the first chirp of the bird; and in tropical and semi-tropical climates, the birds begin to whistle at the earliest approach of dawn.

"And all the daughters of music shall be brought low." The daughters of music are the voice which produce it, and the ears which enjoy it. Under this delicate figure, representing music as a matron, and the voice and hearing as her daughters, the sacred writer, whose taste is as exquisite as his fancy is inventive, describes the fact that, when other powers fail, the voice too loses its power of making melody, and the hearing becomes dull and inappreciative.

"Also, when they shall be afraid of that which is high." The aged are made dizzy by looking down from high places, or by looking up to them. It is not only fear that they feel,

it is something more; it is the nervousness which shrinks from the sight of anything to which the eye is unaccustomed. A young man, when debilitated by sickness, while his nerves are yet unstrung, is afraid of that which is high; and this condition, which is temporary with him in youth, and only accidental, will become chronic, and his normal condition when he is old.

“And fears shall be in the way.” The great characteristic of old age is timidity. Old men fear death, and danger in any form, more than the young. One would suppose that they would care much less for life than the young; and so perhaps they do. But in the first place, they have formed the life-long habit of caution and care; and in the next place, they are governed more by their sensibilities than by their judgment; and finally, their weakened nerves can bear no strain. Hence, wherever they go, fears are in the way and sometimes they excite an affectionate smile, when they caution a vigorous and active young man to take care lest he fall, while walking in a place of perfect safety.

“And the almond tree shall flourish.” Here is described the whitened locks of the man of many years. It is remarkable that the poet does not compare the white hair of the aged to anything that is perishing, and passing away, but rather, under the figure of the flowering almond, to that which is fresh, and blooming, and blossoming into life.

“And the grasshopper shall be a burden.” To the aged and infirm, everything is a burden. They are a burden to themselves. Certainly they are not capable of enduring fatigue; and such is their dread of effort, that they shrink from that which even looks like effort. How often the aged parent fails to write to the absent, though much-loved, son, just because he scarcely feels able to write. To such, even so small a thing as a grasshopper would be a burden.

“And desire shall fail.” This is the first specification

that is made in literal terms. All the senses become blunted; all the appetites lose their keenness; the passions die out; all that nervous system, which is the source of pleasure to the young, is inoperative with the aged, and their chief desire is to be let alone. Instincts which once loudly asserted themselves, now ask for nothing.

“Because man goeth to his long home.” This is the grave. It is compared, not to a dungeon, nor to a loathsome place, but to a home; not to a temporary stopping place, which has none of the real sacredness of a home, though it be called by that name, but to a *long* home, which is a real home, and therefore a place not to be dreaded, but to be loved.

“And the mourners go about the streets.” The expression is again literal, and refers to the funeral obsequies, when mourners walk the streets in lamentation.

“Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken.” The silver cord has reference to the spinal marrow, which is a kind of elongation of the brain, and which is the great nervous centre of the whole system. When this fails, all fails. Its rupture is certain and immediate death. Its inflammation produces the terrible disease known as meningitis. Recent experiments are said to show that it is, to some extent, the seat of intelligence. When the brain is entirely removed from some animals, they still show some signs of intelligent thought, so long as the silver cord is unbroken. It may be that three thousand years ago Solomon knew what has been discovered by us within the last few months. This spinal marrow, called by anatomists *medulla spinalis*, has the appearance of a silver cord; and hence the figure.

The golden bowl is a kind of membranous basin of a golden color, in which the brain is contained. It is the casket in which the gem of all gems is kept. When the casket is broken, the gem is lost.

“Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.” The fountain is the left ventricle of the heart, whence the blood is thrown out to supply the demands of the system. As it seems to be the source of supply, it may properly be compared to a well, or fountain. The pitcher is the aorta, a large artery, which first receives the blood from the well. The wheel is that power of contraction and dilation, called by anatomists *systole* and *diastole*, which causes the circulation of the blood. When the pitcher is broken—that is, when the aorta is ruptured—instantaneous death must ensue; and such, also, would be the case if the wheel were broken, that is, if from *asthenia* or other cause, either the expansion or the contraction of the heart should cease.

Observe that, in describing the awful phenomena of death, the poet delicately evades a cruel literality, and represents the facts under figures, which, though saddening, are not heart-rending. Never before, I suppose, and never since, has so terrific a catastrophe as the bursting of the heart, or the stoppage of its functions, been described in terms at once so graphic and so exhaustive, and at the same time so softened by tender sentiment and poetic imagery as to deprive them of all severity. We are spared the rude shock which the statement of the facts would have made, if clothed in harsh words, or even in plain words; while yet the presentation is more vivid than if it had been literal. There is not the cold description of the anatomist in scientific terms; there is not the rudeness of the vulgar, nor of the thoughtless; there is not the coarseness of the unfeeling; all is solemn, impressive, touching, beautiful, even in ghastly death. None could have done it but one, who was at once a poet, a genius, a philosopher, and a saint; and none can appreciate it, who have not, to some extent, at least, corresponding qualities.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and

the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Here again the kingly preacher-poet uses literal terms, which need not be explained.

Now, in regard to the production as a whole, notice:

1. The inimitable and astounding skill of Solomon as a rhetorician, as an artist in words. This little piece of composition alone would have made any man immortal. It has no peer in human literature.

2. Notice his profound knowledge of the demands of human nature. The intellectual element calls for plain statements, that can be clearly understood. The sensibilities call for that which will assuage the severity of the purely literal; and the sacred writer, breathing the spirit of poetry into every line, meets each demand, equalling a scientist in exactness, and like an angel in tenderness.

3. Notice his scientific knowledge. Anatomy is not one of the recent sciences. It is an old science revived. Two hundred and fifty years ago, Harvey in England, discovered the circulation of the blood, and the world was startled by his announcement. But Solomon had known all about it three thousand years before. We are elsewhere told, that he wrote an extended treatise on botany, describing every plant "from the cedar of Lebanon, to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," and also a treatise on zoology, describing every beast, and fowl, and creeping thing, and the fish of the sea. His philosophy was spoken in three thousand proverbs, and his poems were a thousand and five.

4. Notice his affecting appeal to youth. He describes to them that old age, and that final catastrophe to which they are hastening, as fast as Time on its ceaseless, tireless wing can waft them; he puts before them, in colors glowing enough to startle, and subdued enough to be inviting, the decrepitude, the imbecility, the nervelessness, the sorrows, the pains, of the evil day, when even the grasshopper will be a

burden ; and lastly of the final stroke, and of the funeral, and the grave, and of the dust, and of the immortal soul, and of *judgment*, and of GOD ; and by all these things of thrilling interest, and soul-stirring solemnity, he beseeches them, not as a mass, but one at a time, saying, "Remember now *thy* Creator in the days of thy youth."

Remember that he is your Creator ; remember that you are therefore responsible to him for the life he has given you. Remember that you are under supreme obligations of gratitude, reverence, obedience, and love. Remember that time is short, and that death is certain. Remember that when old age shall overtake you, which it will do apace, your failing powers will incapacitate you from radical change in life. Remember that God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Remember all this ; rememember it now,—now while you have the opportunity. Give your hearts to God now, while they are young and fresh, and at least comparatively pure. Wait not for the evil day, but remember *now* thy Creator in the morning of life, and at its midday he will prosper thee, and when the evening shall come, thy sun will set on a sky that is cloudless.

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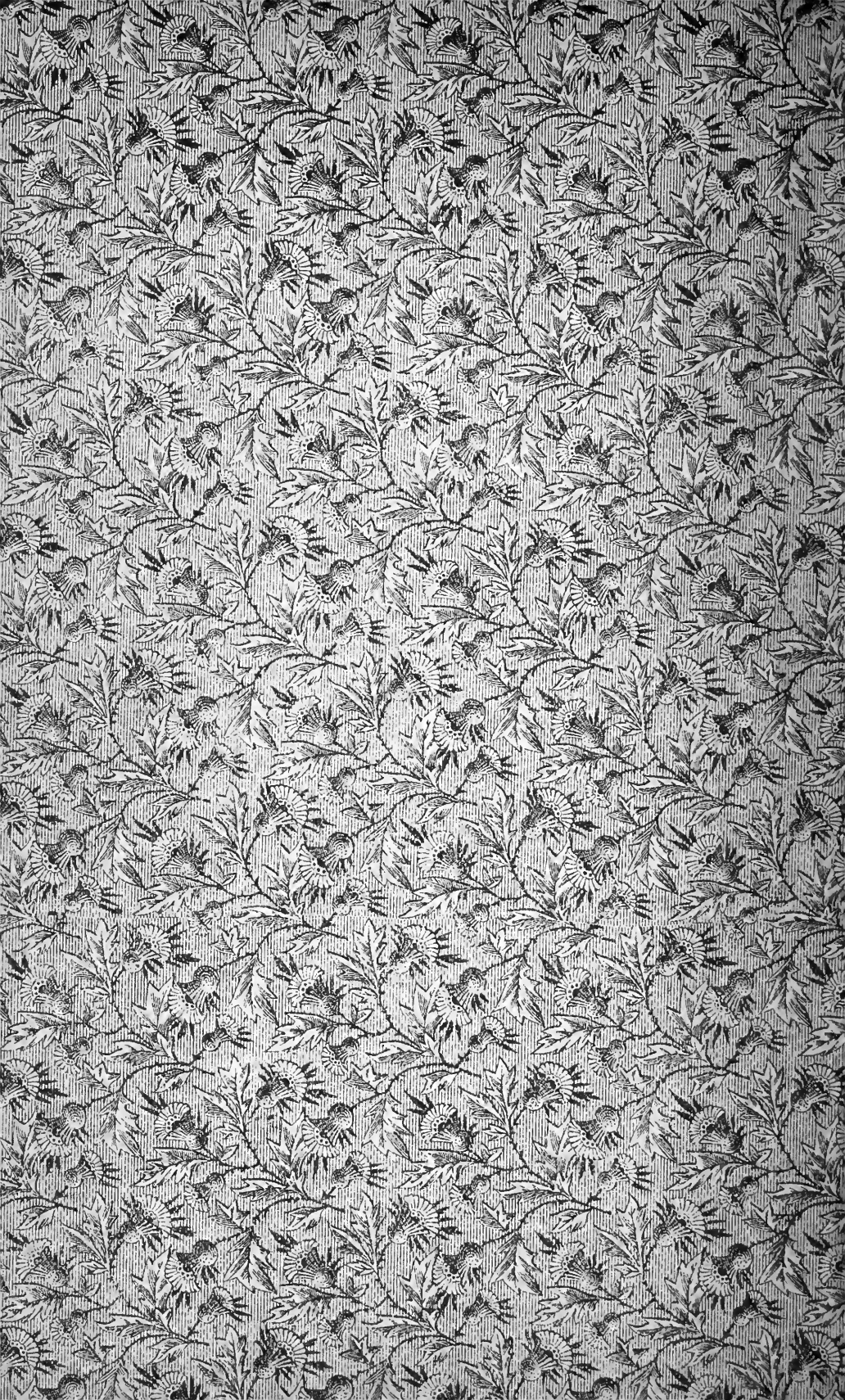
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